

CAZA

THE AGE OF DARKNESS



HEAVY METAL



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Homages and thanks to Stefan Wul, Harlan Ellison, Albert-Marie Schmidt, Charles Dits, Gustave Doré, Le Piranese, Jack Kirby, Alfred Rethel, Edgar Poe, Khalil Gibran, William Shakespeare and all the great others... all the tales... myths and legends, the Dictionary of Symbols... and also Pompéi, the Beziers cemetery and the ramparts of Carcassonne...

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CLOUDS

CHAZ



... THE CLOUDS ARE KNOWN AS STRATUS, NIMBUS, CUMULUS... OR CUMULUS NIMBUS... BUT, AS FAR AS HE'S CONCERNED, THEY'RE JUST...



CLOUDS...

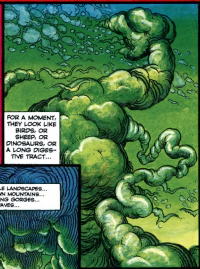


... CLOUDS THAT MOVE... RACING ACROSS THE SKIES... CONSTANTLY CHANGING SHAPES...

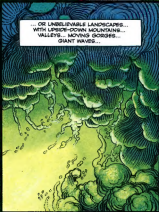




... SOMETIMES RESEMBLING TOP HATS,
SOMETIMES GIANTS
WITH FAT STOMACHS...



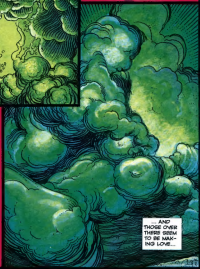
FOR A MOMENT,
THEY LOOK LIKE
BIRDS, OR
SHEEP, OR
DINOSAURS, OR
A LONG DIGESTIVE TRACT...



... OR UNBELIEVABLE LANDSCAPES...
WITH UPSIDE-DOWN MOUNTAINS...
VALLEYS... MOVING GORGES...
GIANT WAVES...



SOME SEEM TO BE
CHASING ONE ANOTHER...
AND THAT LARGE
ONE OVER THERE SEEMS
ABOUT TO SWALLOW
ANOTHER SMALLER ONE.

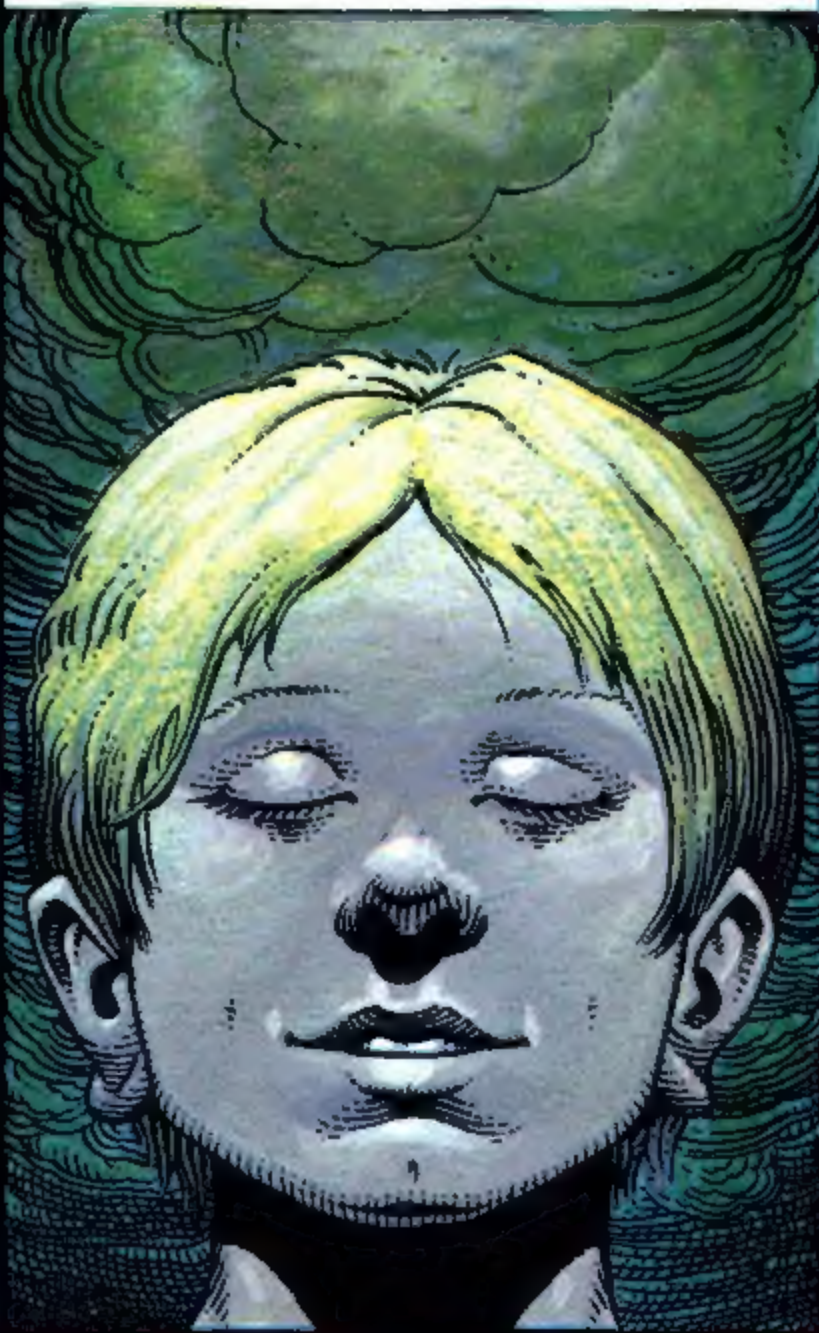


AND
THOSE OVER
THERE SEEM
TO BE MAKING LOVE...



THE CHILD TALKS TO THEM... HE LISTENS CAREFULLY... AND THEY REPLY IN THE SILENT LANGUAGE OF THE CLOUDS...

THEY DESCRIBE HOW THEY ARE BORN... AND HOW THEY GROW... THEY TELL HIM OF THEIR UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTERS, AND OF ALL THE UNKNOWN COUNTRIES THEY FLY OVER AS THEY ARE BLOWN BY THE COLD NORTH WIND AND LIGHT SOUTHERN BREEZES... AND THEN...



... AND THEN... SUDDENLY IT'S TIME TO RISE... TO FORGET QUIET CONTEMPLATION, DREAMS AND CONVERSATIONS...



... TIME TO GO HOME...

... FOR AFTER MUCH HESITATION AND INDECISION, THE CLOUDS HAVE FINALLY DECIDED TO LET THEIR RAINDROPS FALL...



COVER-
ING THE
EARTH...



... WITH THE
POISONED RAIN
OF THE LAND OF
THE DMS.

79

THE FLUTE PLAYER

CLASH
87



...AH... EVEN HERE! THEY ARE HERE TOO!
AND THEY'VE COVERED THE LAND WITH
THEIR DAM-VILLAGES, THEIR MACHINE-
HOUSES, THEIR METAL-CAVES...

...THEY ARE THE ONE...
AND THEY ARE STILL
SPRAWLING ON THE
SURFACE OF THE EARTH.





YOU WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY HADN'T CHANGED, SO YOU WALKED ACROSS THE CITY... BREATHING IN THEIR BLAND ODOR... THE ODOR OF STERILIZED DEATH. YOU FELT AN ANCIENT FEAR RISING IN THEM... AND AN EQUALLY ANCIENT ANGER IN YOURSELF...



...UNLESS THE ANGER WAS IN THEM... AND THE FEAR WAS IN YOU...

YOU WALKED ACROSS THE CITY OF THE CMS...
AND YOU SAW THAT NOTHING HAD CHANGED.
THEY HADN'T CHANGED AND NEITHER HAD YOU...



YOU WENT OUT OF
THE CITY AND
CROUCHED OVER TO
THE OPPOSITE BANK
TO THE OTHER EDGE
OF THE WORLD WHERE
TREES STILL EXIST...



...YOU REMEMBERED A VERY ANCIENT BOOK,
ONE THAT WAS ALMOST FORGOTTEN.



IT RECOUNTED A
LEGEND FROM
THE DAYS
BEFORE THE
CMS, WHEN
THERE WERE
FLUTES...



AND FLUTE
PLAYERS

YOU WENT BACK TO THE CITY OF
THE OWLS. WITH YOUR FLUTE.

AND YOU
PLAYED FOR
THEM.



...BUT OF COURSE IT DIDN'T
WORK...
...YOU SHOULD HAVE
KNOWN IT WOULDN'T...
...A FLUTE CARVED OF ELM...
...AS IF YOU HAD THE RIGHT
TO TAKE ANOTHER LIFE...
EVEN IF IT WAS ONLY A
TREE'S LIFE... TO PAY THE
PRICE OF YOUR HATRED...

...PLEASURE IS ALL YOU
NEED TO GIVE LIFE...
BUT DEATH REQUIRES
SUFFERING...

...YOU HAVE
TO SACRIFICE
YOURSELF...

...YOU COULD HAVE GIVEN UP ... BUT,
OF COURSE, IT WAS MUCH TOO LATE.
YOU WERE ALREADY QUITE MAD,
AND HAD BEEN FOR A LONG TIME ...

YOU WALKED ACROSS THE NIGHT TO
A DISTANT PLACE TO MEET WITH
A SAGE WHO POSSESSED A
FORGOTTEN SCIENCE ... AND THERE
YOU SAW THE KEY.

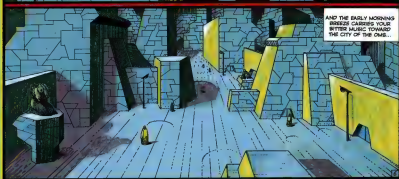


...HERE YOU ARE
ON THE OTHER
SIDE OF NIGHT...

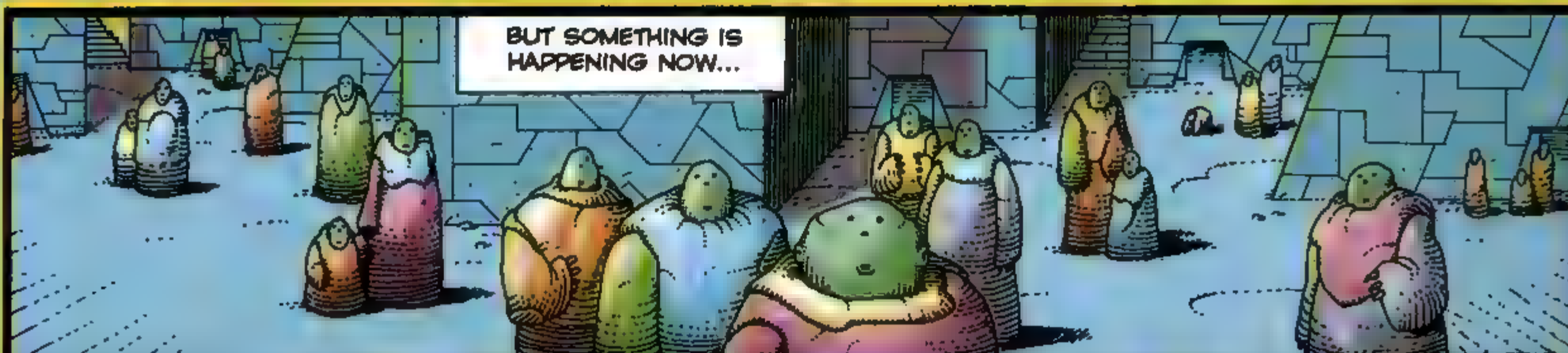


YOU HAVE A NEW
ROUTE...

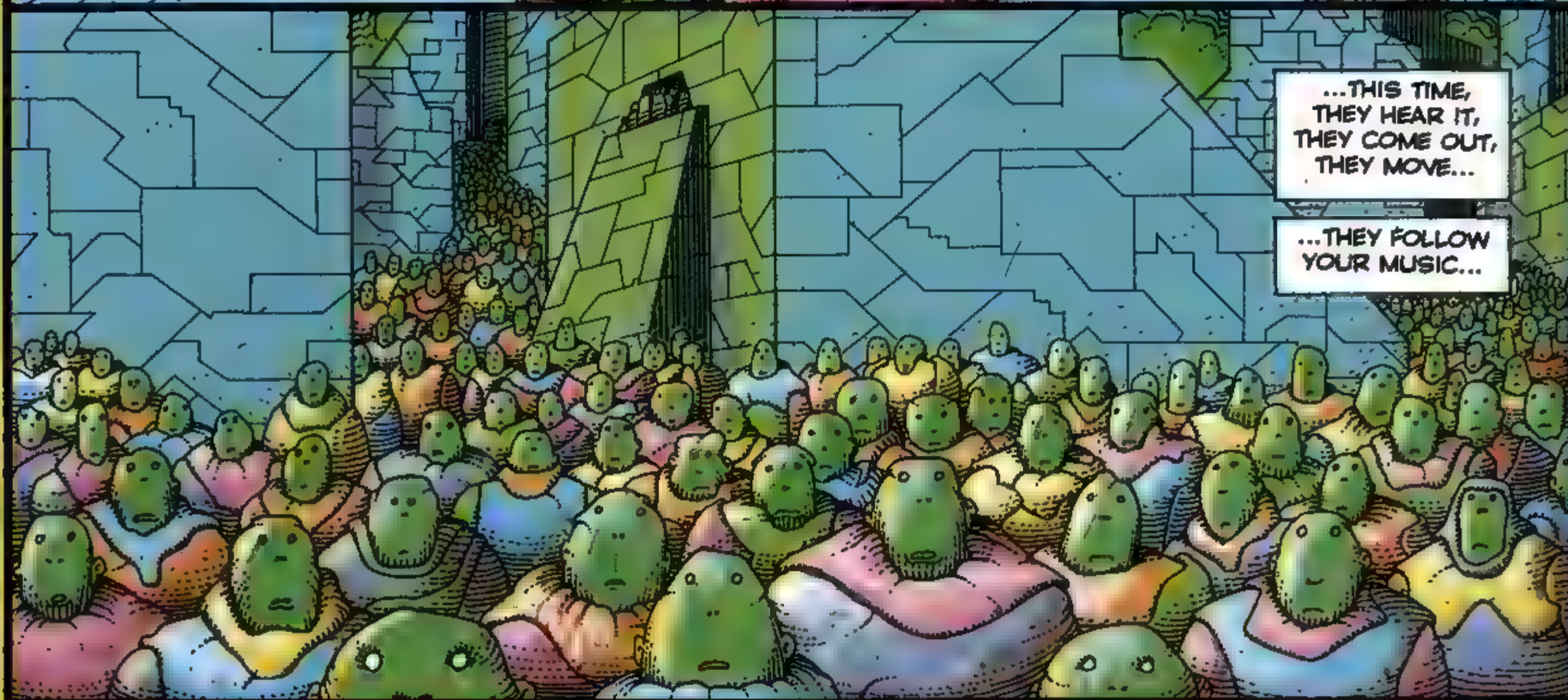
...AND YOU'RE
PLAYING AGAIN...



AND THE EARLY MORNING
BREEZE CARRIES YOUR
BITTER MUSIC TOWARD
THE CITY OF THE ONE...

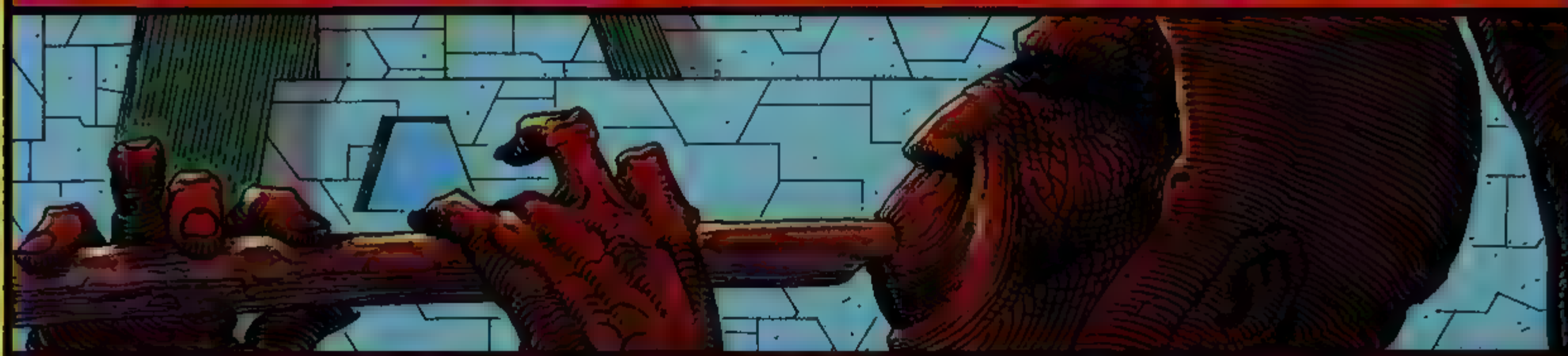


BUT SOMETHING IS
HAPPENING NOW...



...THIS TIME,
THEY HEAR IT,
THEY COME OUT,
THEY MOVE...

...THEY FOLLOW
YOUR MUSIC...



AND FINALLY, A HORDE OF OMS
GATHERS ON THE EDGE OF THE CANAL.





SLOWLY AND
DELIBERATELY THEY
WADE INTO THE
MURKY WATERS.



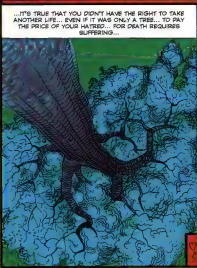
ONE BY ONE, OR IN
BUNCHES, WORDLESSLY,
THEY LET THEMSELVES
SINK... AND IN NO TIME,
THEY DROWN IN TOTAL
SILENCE.



YOU KEEP PLAY-
ING TILL THE LAST
OF THE ONE HAS
DISAPPEARED.



...THEN YOU CAN
STOP.



...IT'S TRUE THAT YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE
ANOTHER LIFE... EVEN IF IT WAS ONLY A TREE... TO PAY
THE PRICE OF YOUR HATRED... FOR DEATH REQUIRES
SUFFERING...



...AND YOU
HAVE TO
SACRIFICE
YOURSELF.

JOHN
COP

MANDRAGORA

39

SOMETIMES WHEN THE OMS ARE DELAYED WITH BOSSBOD, THEY VENTURE FORTH FROM THEIR MECHANICAL DWELLINGS AND ATTACK ANYTHING OR ANYONE THAT IS UNLIKE THEM... INSTEAD, HE IS DIFFERENT, FOREIGN, UNUSUAL... ALL OTHERS.

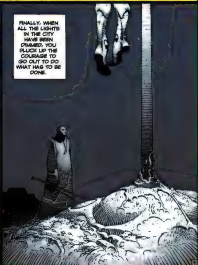
THIS EVENING, THE PERSON THEY KILLED IN YOUR FRIEND.

AT THE EDGE OF TOWN, WHERE THEIR SHAMEFULLY ABUNDANT GARBAGE IS SCATTERED, THEY HANGED HIM FROM A PHOTO-POST.

...TREES CEASED TO GROW LONG AGO IN THE CITIES OF THE OMS.

FEAR GRIPS YOU... YOU FEEL NAUSEATED, YET YOU STAND AND WAIT... YOU MAY BE AFRAID, BUT YOU CANNOT LEAVE HIM LIKE THIS... HE WAS YOUR FRIEND... SO YOU WAIT...

FINALLY, WHEN ALL THE LIGHTS IN THE CITY HAVE BEEN DIMMED, YOU PLUCK UP THE COURAGE TO GO OUT TO DO WHAT HAS TO BE DONE.



YOU START DIGGING NEXT TO
THE GALLOW. YOU HOPE
THAT THE LAYER OF EARTH
AND REFUSE IS DEEP ENOUGH
TO DIG A GRAVE...



...YOU DIG AND THEN YOU FIND
IT... COVERED IN ITS ROTTING
MATRIX...
IT IS THERE... LIKE THE DULL ECHO
OF A HALF-FORGOTTEN MYTH...
THE MEMORY OF A MEMORY...
YES, YOU'VE HEARD THAT, LONG
AGO, THIS STRANGE PLANT WAS
SOMETIMES FOUND NEXT TO GAL-
LOWS AND CROSSES. IT WAS SAID
TO GROW FROM THE SPILLED SEED
OF INNOCENT MEN WHO'D BEEN
EXECUTED.

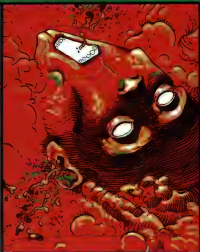
YOU KNOW
ITS NAME:

MANDRAGORE

YOU DON'T KNOW THAT WHEN
IT IS UPROOTED FROM ITS
EARTHLY MATRIX...



...THE
MANDRAGORA
SCREAMS!

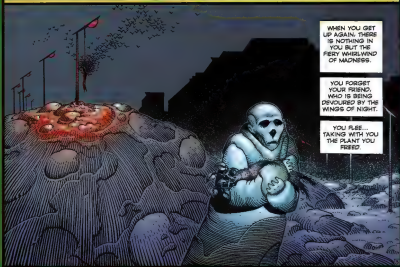


YOU EXPERIENCE DEATH... A SCORCHING SENSATION.

WHEN YOU GET
UP AGAIN, THERE
IS NOTHING IN
YOU BUT THE
VERY WHIRLWIND
OF MADNESS.

YOU FORGET
YOUR FRIEND,
WHO IS BEING
DEVoured BY THE
WINGS OF NIGHT.

YOU FLEE...
TAKING WITH YOU
THE PLANT YOU
REED.





IT IS A FEMALE PLANT.

ITS THICK BOOTS ARE
REMINISCENT OF AN
UNFINISHED FEMALE CREATURE.
A PRIMITIVE EVE.
AS IF THE PRIMAORDIAL SLT
HAD BEEN FASHIONED BY
THE UNSKILLED HANDS OF A
MISCHAPEN HALF-GOD.

OR AS IF THE CREATOR,
WANDERING IN SEARCH OF
MORE COMPLEX FORMS, HAD
ABANDONED AN EARLIER
ATTEMPT, AS ONE ABANDONS
AN ABORTED FETUS OR TRIES
TO FORGET SOMETHING
SHAMEFUL.

THE PLANT IS AGELESS.
IT IS IMMOBILE, LIKE THE
EMBRYO OF AN OLD MAN,
THE MUMMY OF A FETUS.



YOU PUT IT IN AN OBLONG BOX, WHICH YOU HAVE FILLED WITH A SOFT COVERING OF THE EARTH THAT GAVE IT BIRTH: EARTH THAT HAS BEEN NOURISHED WITH ASHES AND CARRION, AS RICH AND UNHEALTHY AS THAT OF ANCIENT CEMETERIES...

...THEN YOU EXPOSE IT TO THE MOON...



YOU FIND YOUR FORGOTTEN BOOKS, AND NOW YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT ITS SPECIES... AND ABOUT HER...





...YOU KNOW THAT
VERY SOON YOU'LL
HAVE TO...



...FEED
HER!



...AND
YOU
KNOW...

... WHAT
FOOD ...



SHE WILL
STAND!



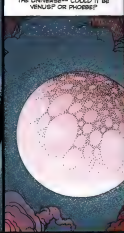
WHILE SHE FEEDS LONG AND GREEDILY ON YOUR
SEED, A VOICE BURSTS OUT OF YOU, A SLOW, DULL,
HYPNOTIC VOICE THAT IS OLDER THAN LANGUAGE.



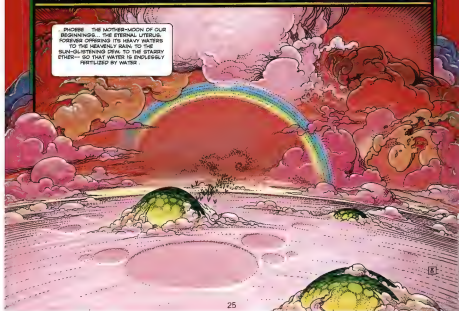
...AND THE IMAGES ASSAIL YOU...
THE VOICE EVOKES A WATERY
COUNTRY, AN OCEAN AS VAST AS
THE UNIVERSE-- COULD IT BE
VENUS? OR PHOBOS?

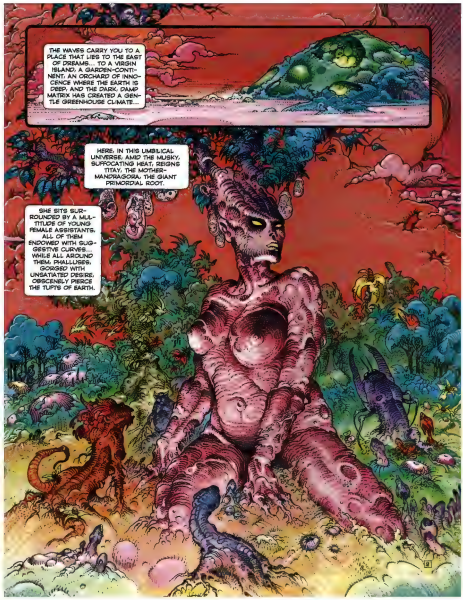


...IT IS THE VOICE
OF CHAOS
EXPLORING ITS
OWN INCOHER-
ENCE AS IT
SEES THE PRI-
MORDIAL WORD.



PHOBOS-- THE MOTHER-MOON OF OUR
BEGINNINGS... THE ETERNAL LUTERUS,
FOREVER OFFERING ITS HEAVY WATERS
TO THE HEAVENLY RAIN, TO THE
SUN-GLISTENING DRAK TO THE STAGGY
ETHER-- SO THAT WATER IS ENDLESSLY
FERTILIZED BY WATER.





THE WAVES CARRY YOU TO A PLACE THAT LIES TO THE EAST OF DREAMS... TO A VIRGIN ISLAND, A GARDEN-CONTINENT, AN ORCHARD OF INNOCENCE WHERE THE EARTH IS DEEP, AND THE DARK, DAMP MATRIX HAS CREATED A GENTLE GREENHOUSE CLIMATE...

HERE, IN THIS UMBILICAL UNIVERSE, AMID THE MUSKY, SUFFOCATING HEAT, REIGNS ITTAY, THE MOTHER, MANUWAGORA, THE GIANT PRIMORDIAL ROOT.

SHE SITS SUR-
ROUNDED BY A MUL-
TITUDE OF YOUNG
FEMALE ASSISTANTS,
ALL OF THEM
ENDOWED WITH SUG-
GESTIVE CURVES...
WHILE ALL AROUND
THEM, PALLUSES,
GOBBED WITH
UNSATIATED DESIRE,
OBSCENELY PIERCE
THE TUFTS OF EARTH.

IN THIS IMPROBABLE
GEOLOGICAL ERA, THE
EARTH'S PERPETUAL
STATE OF GENESIS IS
CEASELESSLY GIVING
BIRTH TO ITS FUTURE
LIVENESSES.

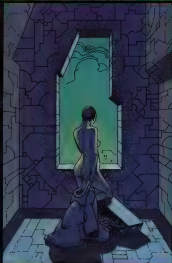
HERE, AT THE HEART OF
THIS VEGETABLE
NIGHTMARE LADEN WITH
SHAKING OFFSPRING,
THE FIRST ASTONISHED
FACES EMERGE FROM
CHAOS.

THIS IS THE GARDEN
OF ALL BIRTH, WHERE
EVERY SHAPE AND
FORCE UNDERGO
GESTATION.

...THIS IS WHERE THE MANDRAGORA
COMES FROM...

...THE PLACE FROM
WHICH YOU WERE
EXCLUDED, LITTLE
ONE...

SHE'S TAKING YOU BACK



THERE... SHE'S TAKEN YOUR BLOOD,
YOUR SWEAT, YOUR TEARS, YOUR
SEED... HER POWERFUL ROOTS HAVE
GROWN INTO YOU, AND NOW...

SHE IS
LEAV-
ING.



TREES CEASED TO GROW
LONG AGO IN THE CITIES
OF THE OMS...

...AND NOW THERE RISES IN
YOU A SOLEMNLY POWERFUL
IMMOBILITY... YOU ARE
ALREADY ROOTED IN THE
HEART OF THE WORLD OF
THE OMS... AND YOUR
SINISTRE MEMBERS PENE-
TRATE THEIR FOUNDATIONS...

... SHE IS LEAVING... AND YOU
ARE NO LONGER AN OM...



THE EARTH DOES NOT BELONG TO THE OMS.
YOU KNOW THEIR TIME IS OVER... AND THAT ONCE MORE IT WILL BE
THE AGE OF THE OTHERS.
IN THE FREE TERRITORIES, GODS AND LEGENDS WILL REPOSSESS
THE LAND.

THERE--- NEAR A RUIN, ON A BURNT-OUT HILLSIDE, OR ON A NEWLY
WASHED SHORE--- IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO ENCOUNTER A SHE-WOLF
OR A UNICORN, A DRYAD OR A GYLPH...
OR EVEN YOU, THE MANDRAGORA.

OW
69

THE BEASTIE

CZ77
79

ONE DAY, WHILE
DIGGING A WELL,
THE MAN WHO LIVED
ON THE MOUNTAIN
ACCIDENTALLY AWAK-
ENED THE BEASTIE...

...THAT HAD
BEEN SLEEPING
FOR CENTURIES
IN THE CENOSIS
OF THE EARTH

...AND SUDDEN-
LY THE BEASTIE
WAS...

...FREED!



BLINDED BY THE BRILLIANCE OF THE LIGHT ON
THE EARTH'S SURFACE, THE BEASTIE BEGAN
WAILING LIKE A BABY, AS IT SOUGHT FOR A
HALF-FORGOTTEN CRY WITHIN ITS OWN THROAT...



IT HESITATED
AND SNIPPED
THE AIR... THEN
OVERCAME BY
A POWERFUL
DESIRE. IT SET
OUT FOR THE
CITY OF THE
OMG.



WHEN IT FOUND THE OMG, THE BEASTIE DISCOVERED ITS PERMAL
SCREAM. IT HOWLED AND CRIED, AND THEN WAS AT PEACE.

AS IT ENTERED THE CITY OF THE OMG,
THE BEASTIE CRIED OUT WITH CRIES.

ITS CRY WAS
ONE WORD
"AMOUR"



BUT THE
BEASTIE'S CRIES
WERE TOO
LOUD AND ITS
DEMANDS WERE
TOO VAST, AND
THE OMG
COULD NOT
UNDERSTAND
THEM. ALL THEY
COULD HEAR
WAS A LOUD
ROAR, FOR ALL
THEY COULD
UNDERSTAND
WAS FEAR.

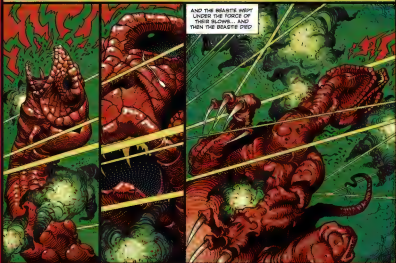
"MEN MONSTERS SEE
A CREATURE THAT IS
LIKE ME THEMSELVES
THEY FEEL THAT THEY'VE
SEEN A MONSTER!"

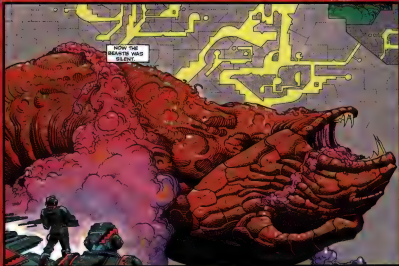


AND SO THE CMC GOT
OUT THE B WEAPONS—
FOR THE CITY-DWELLERS WERE
FAMILIAR WITH ONLY ONE
SORT OF BEHAVIOR:
HOLDING THEIR REARS
BEHIND A COVER OF
VIOLENCE AND HATRED



AND THE BEASTS WENT
UNDER THE FORCE OF
THEIR BLOWN... AND
THEN THE BEASTS DIED





NOW THE
BEASTS WERE
SILENT.



FREEED OF THEIR FEARS, THE
VICTORIOUS ONE LAUGHED AND
CONGRATULATED THEMSELVES.



AND THEN THEY SET
TO WORK TO BUILD
STURDY RAMPARTS
AROUND THEIR CITY.

FAR AWAY, IN THE MOUNTAIN WHERE THE MAN HAD DUG A WELL, IN THE VERY SPOT WHERE THE BEASTE HAD SLEPT, A WOMAN WAS HERDING HER FLOCK. BECAUSE HER GOATS WERE THIRSTY, SHE PICKED UP THE SPADE AND BEGAN TO DIG DEEPER.



AND THERE, IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH, SHE FOUND THE AMOUR-EGG.



THE AMOUR-EGG OF THE BEASTE WHO HAD SLEPT FOR SO LONG IN THE EARTH'S HEART... THE BEAST WHO CRIED "AMOUR."

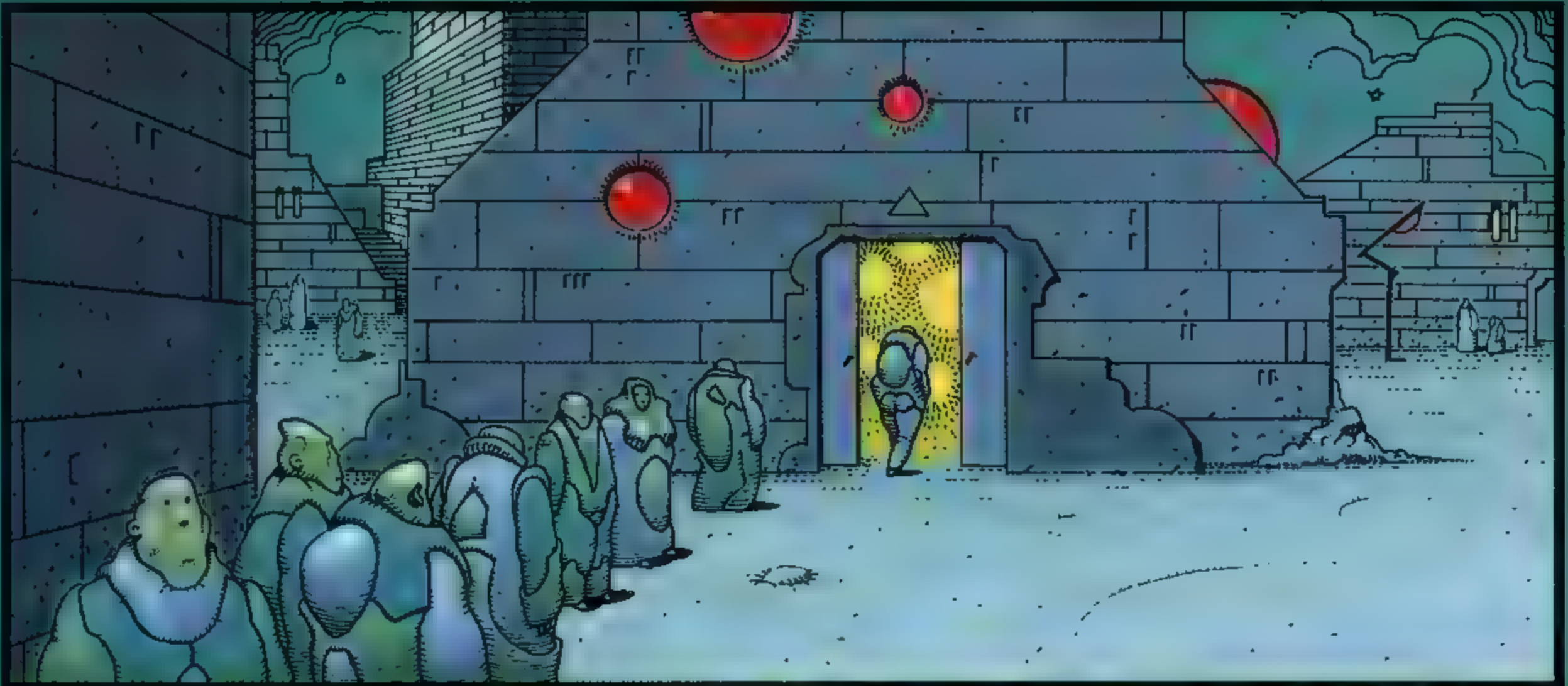


EVER SINCE THAT DAY, SHE'S BEEN BROODING.



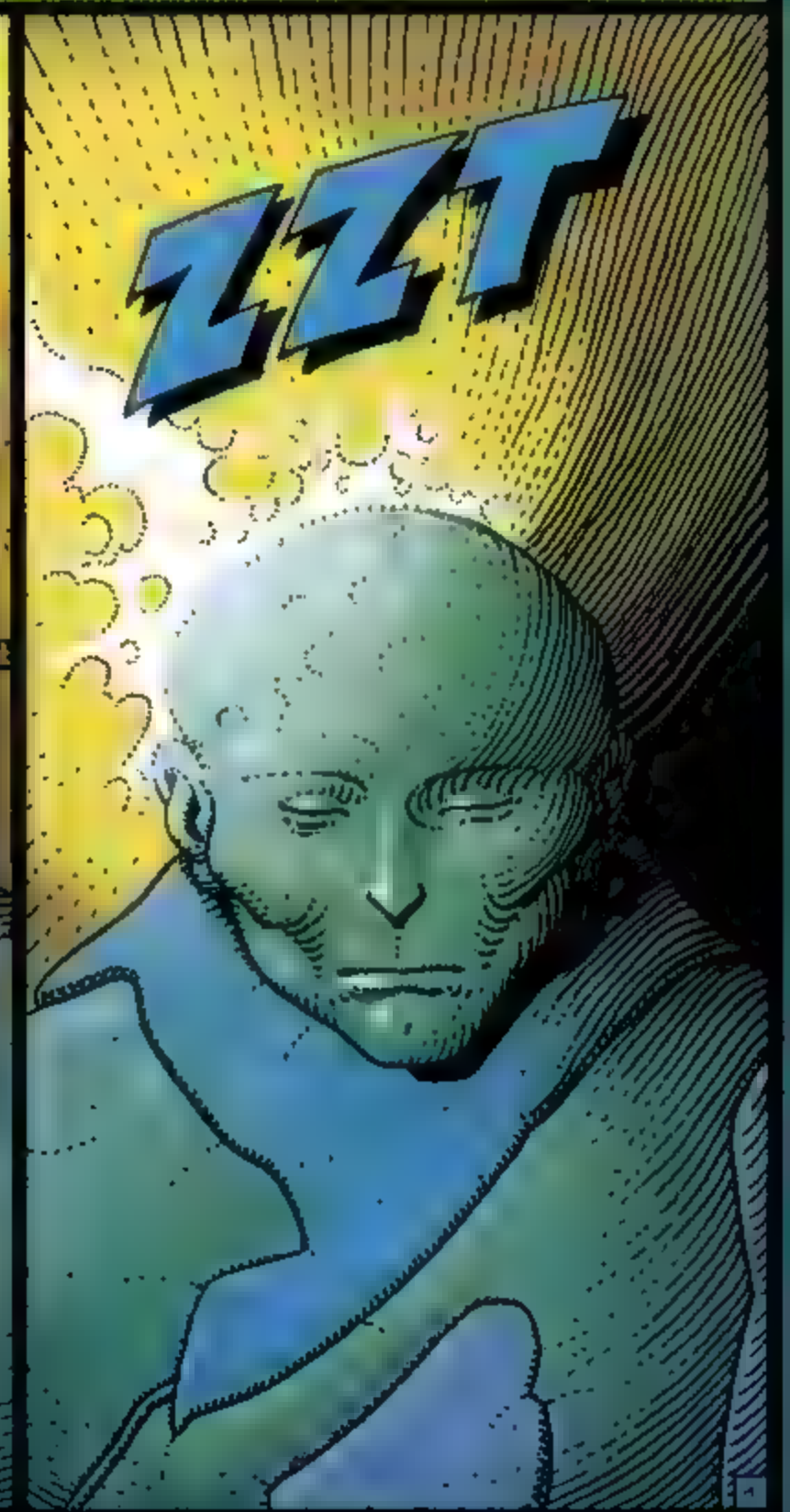
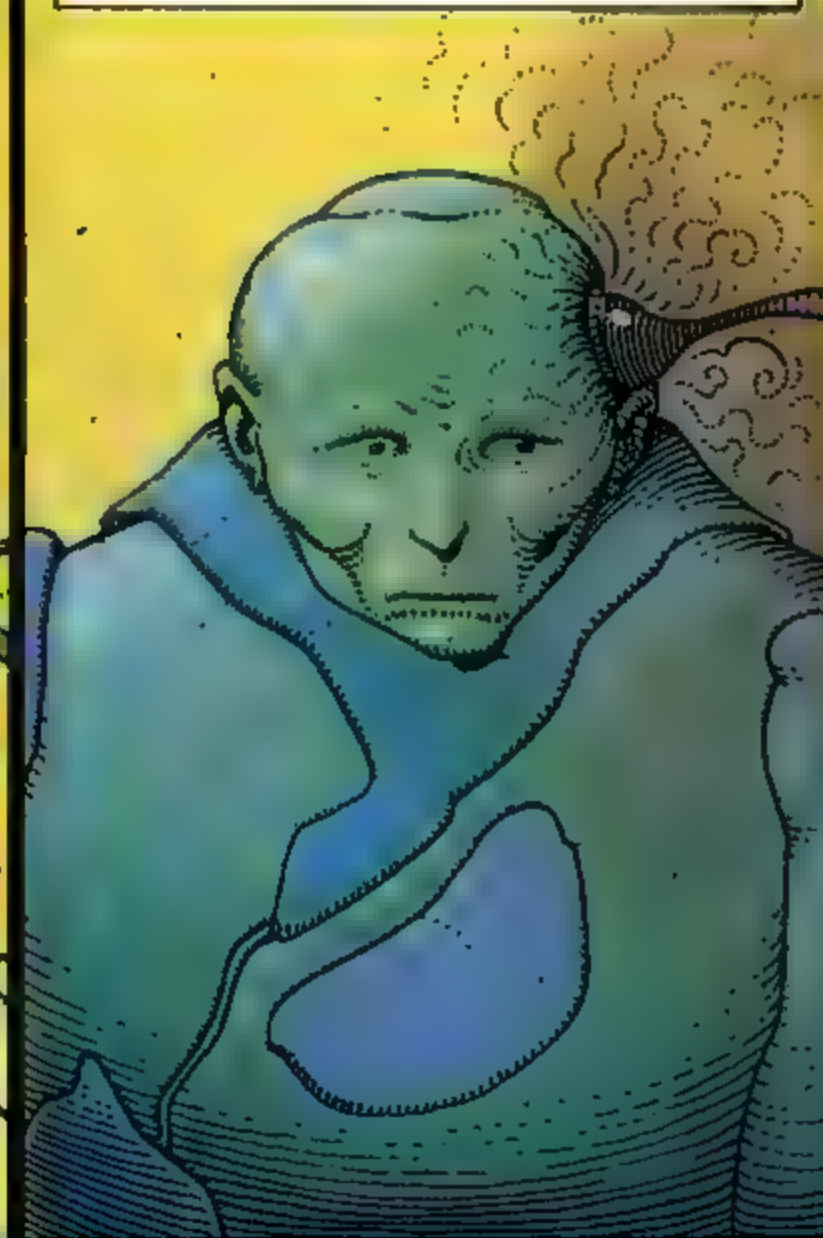
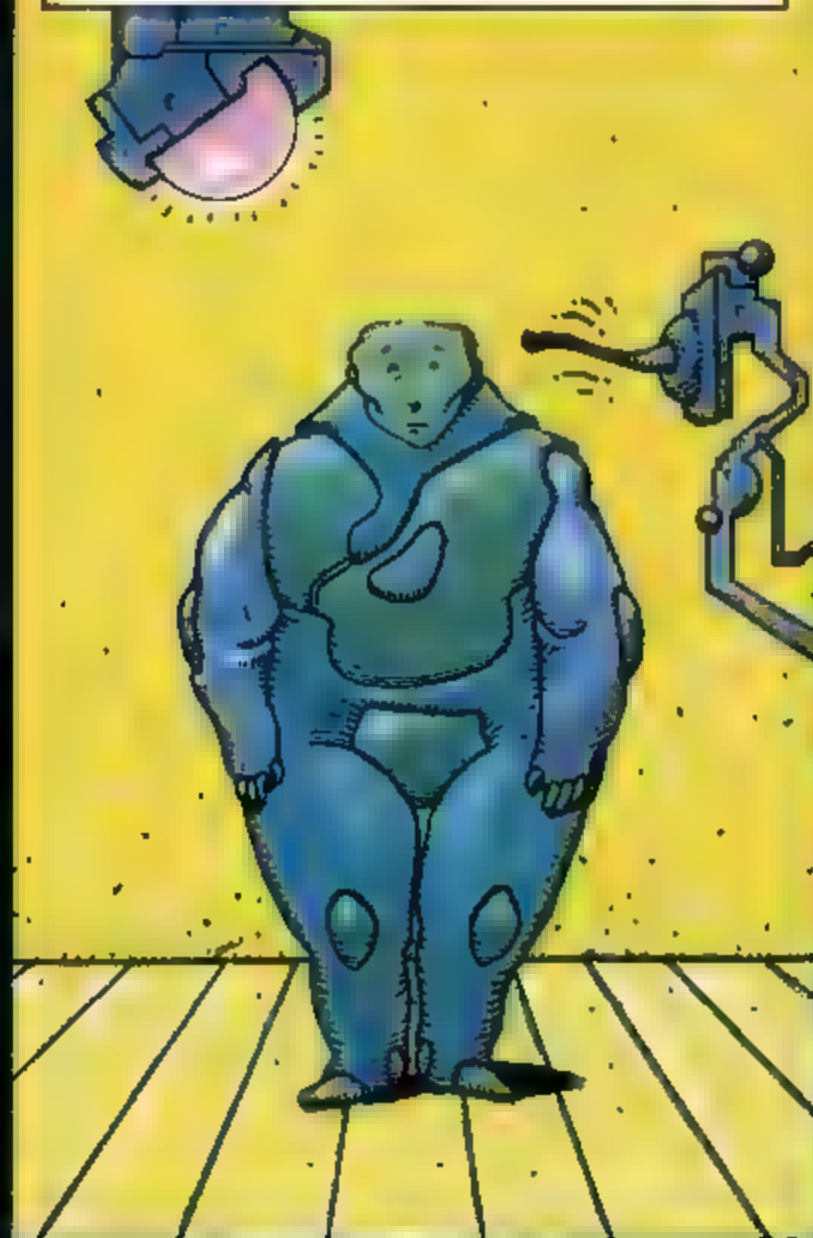
HEMORRHAGE

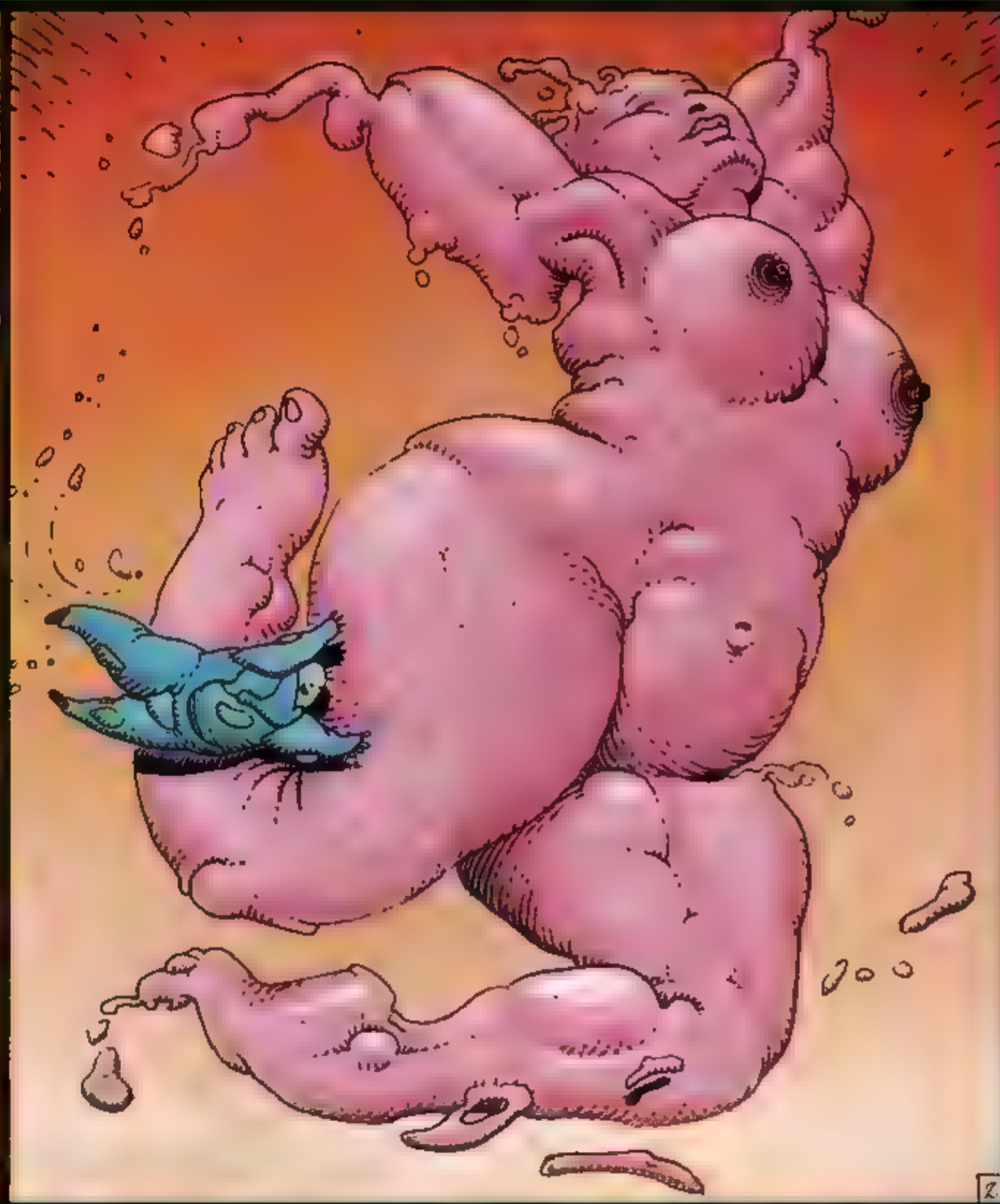
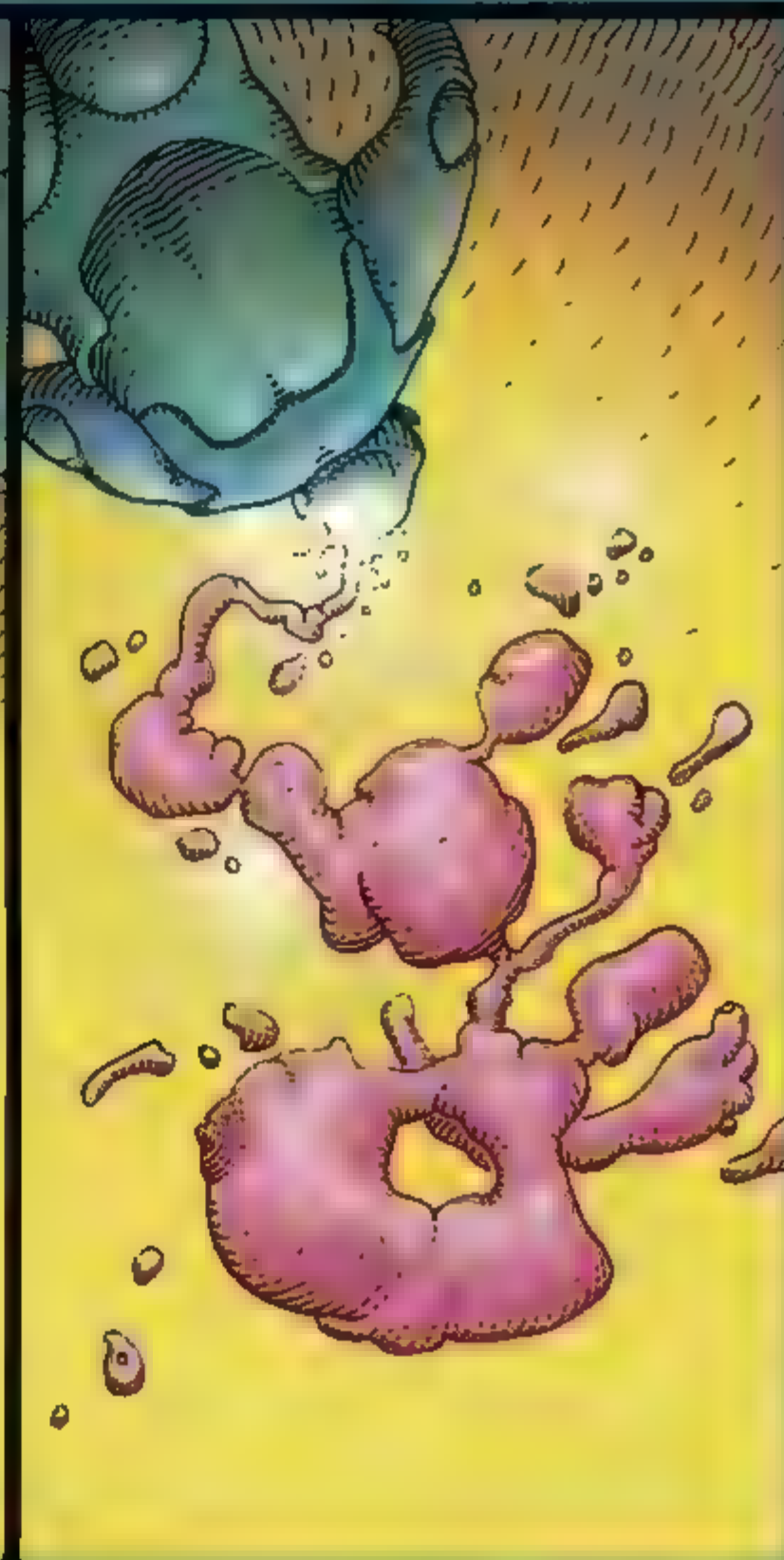
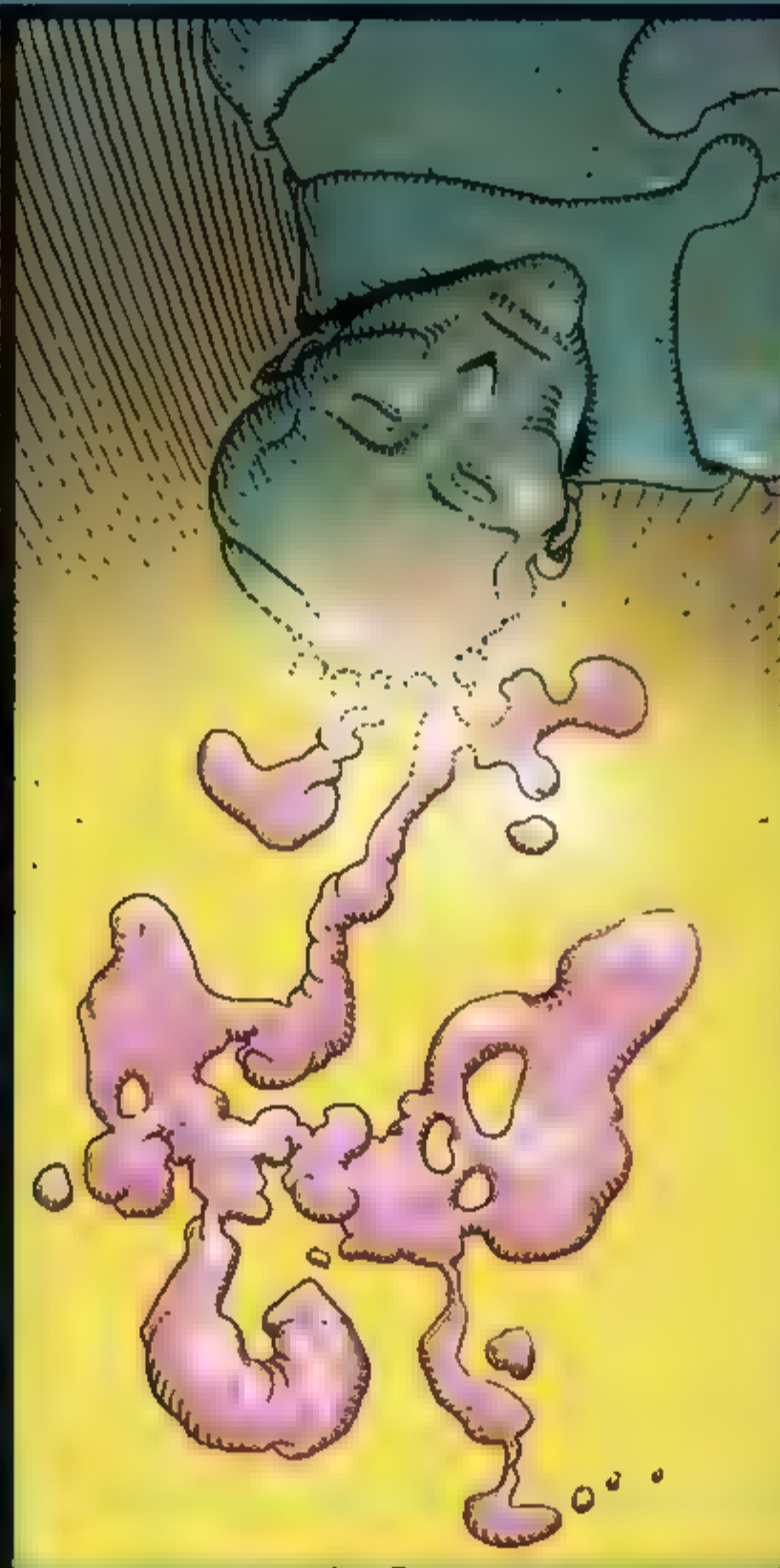
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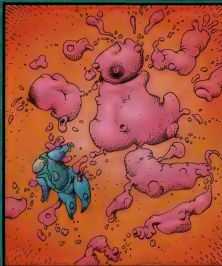


... HELLO, DEAR CITIZEN! YOU HAVE WILLINGLY STEPPED INTO AN EMOTION- DECONTAMINATING MACHINE... RELAX... WE WILL NOW TEMPORARILY DISCONNECT THE LEFT HEMISPHERE OF YOUR BRAIN...

... SO AS TO ESTABLISH A PHASE OF OPENNESS IN THE RIGHT HEMISPHERE. KNOWN AS A "LIGHT TRANCE", THIS PHASE WILL FAVOR THE EXPULSION OF ALL YOUR PSYCHIC WASTE... RELAX... THE OPERATION IS RISK-FREE.







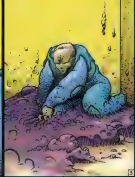
TING!



..... THE SESSION IS OVER,
THE EMOTION-DECONTAMINATING
MACHINE MADE YOUR PSYCHIC
WASTE MATERIALIZE, AND IT WILL
NOW BE INCINERATED. YOU MUST
LEAVE THE CABIN AND JOIN THE
WORLD OF THE 'OMS.....



..... I REPEAT,
THE SESSION IS OVER, THE
EMOTION-DECONTAMINATING
MACHINE MADE YOUR PSYCHIC
WASTE MATERIALIZE, AND IT
WILL NOW BE INCINERATED. YOU
MUST LEAVE THE CABIN AND



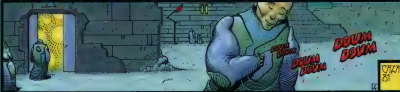
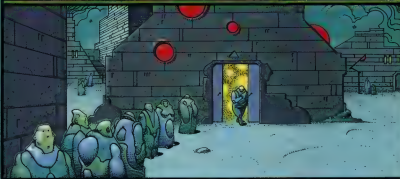
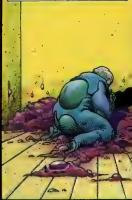
5 4
JOIN THE WORLD OF THE
YOMS..... I REPEAT, THE SESSION IS
OVER. THE EMOTION-DECONTAMINATING
MACHINE MADE YOUR
PSYCHIC WASTE MATERIALIZE,
AND IT WILL NOW BE



5 4
INCINERATED. YOU MUST LEAVE
THE CABIN AND JOIN THE WORLD
OF THE YOMS..... I REPEAT, THE SESSION IS OVER.
THE EMOTION-DECONTAMINATING



5 4
MACHINE MADE YOUR PSYCHIC
WASTE MATERIALIZE, AND IT WILL
NOW BE INCINERATED. YOU MUST
LEAVE THE CABIN AND JOIN THE
WORLD OF THE YOMS.....
I REPEAT, YOU MUST LEAVE THE
CABIN



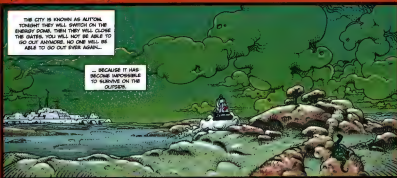
**DOWN
DOWN
DOWN
DOWN**



WINGS OF THE OTHERS 674

THE CITY IS KNOWN AS AL'TOM.
TODAY! THEY WILL SWITCH ON THE
ENERGY DOME. THEN THEY WILL CLOSE
THE GATES. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO
GO OUT ANYMORE. NO ONE WILL BE
ABLE TO GO OUT EVER AGAIN...

... BECAUSE IT HAS
BECOME IMPOSSIBLE
TO SURVIVE ON THE
OUTSIDE.



DEFILED LAND, RADIOACTIVE DESERTS--
DANGER!-- POLLUTED AIR, FOUL
RIVERS-- DANGER!-- POISONOUS,
MODIFIED PLANTS, DANGEROUS,
DEGENERATE MUTANT ANIMALS--
DANGER! DANGER!...

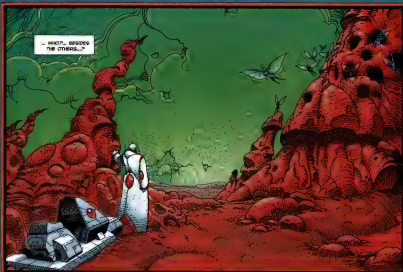
WHO COULD LIVE ON
THE OUTSIDE...



IN AL'TOM, UNDER THE
DOME, EVERYTHING HAS
BEEN PROGRAMMED FOR
THE 'OMS' SURVIVAL! FI-
LTERS, TEMPERATURE-
CONTROLLED AIR--
SAFETY!-- THICE-
DISTILLED WATER,
SYNTHETIC FOOD--
SAFETY! SAFETY!...

...SO... WHO WOULD
WANT TO LIVE ON
THE OUTSIDE?...





— WHO?... BESIDES
THE OTHERS...



LIBTY!



END-OF
YOU'VE
FINALLY
COME!



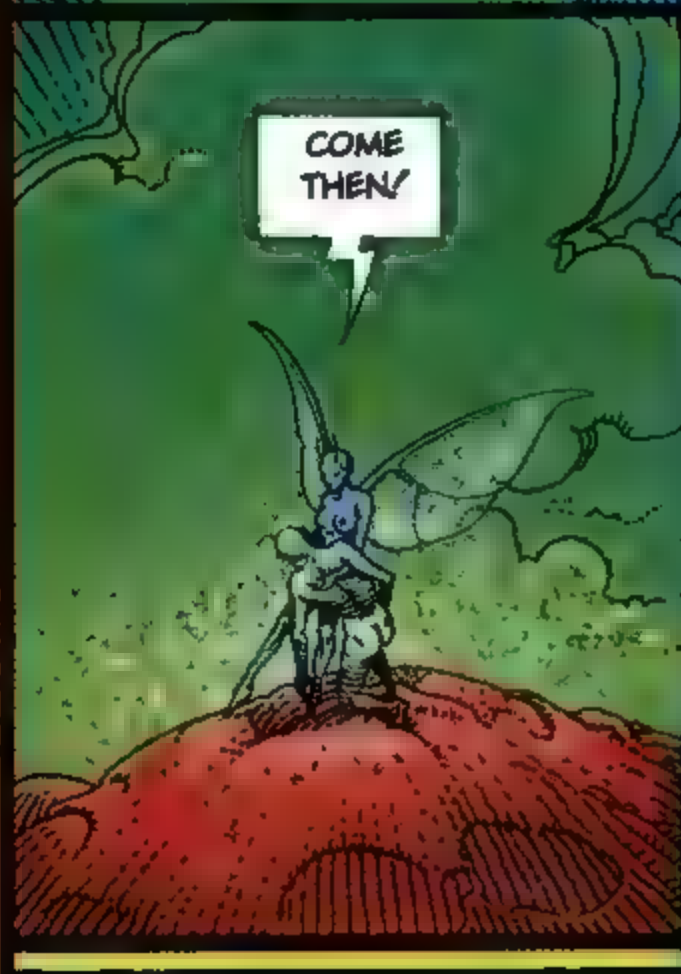
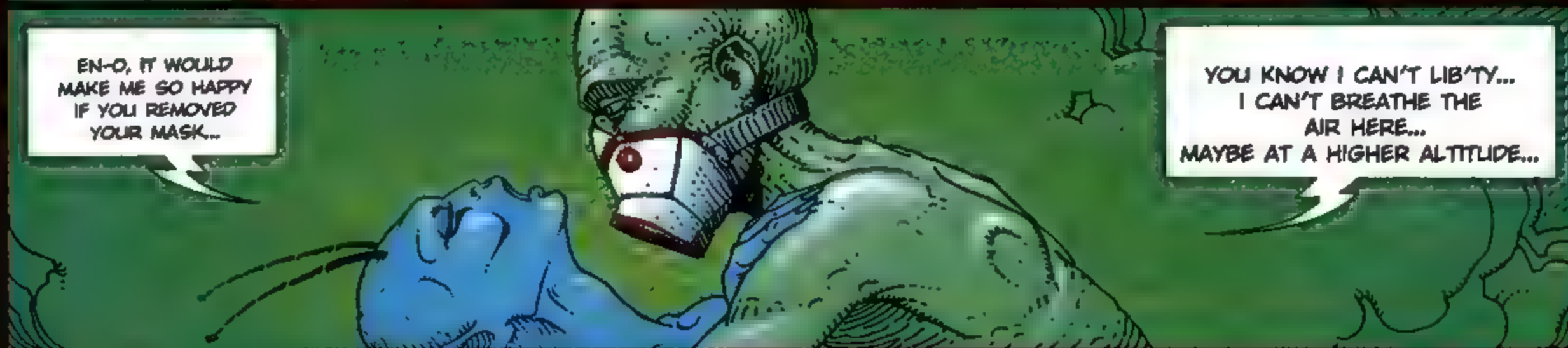
YES, LIBTY... FOR
THE LAST TIME,
YOU KNOW...

I
KNOW...

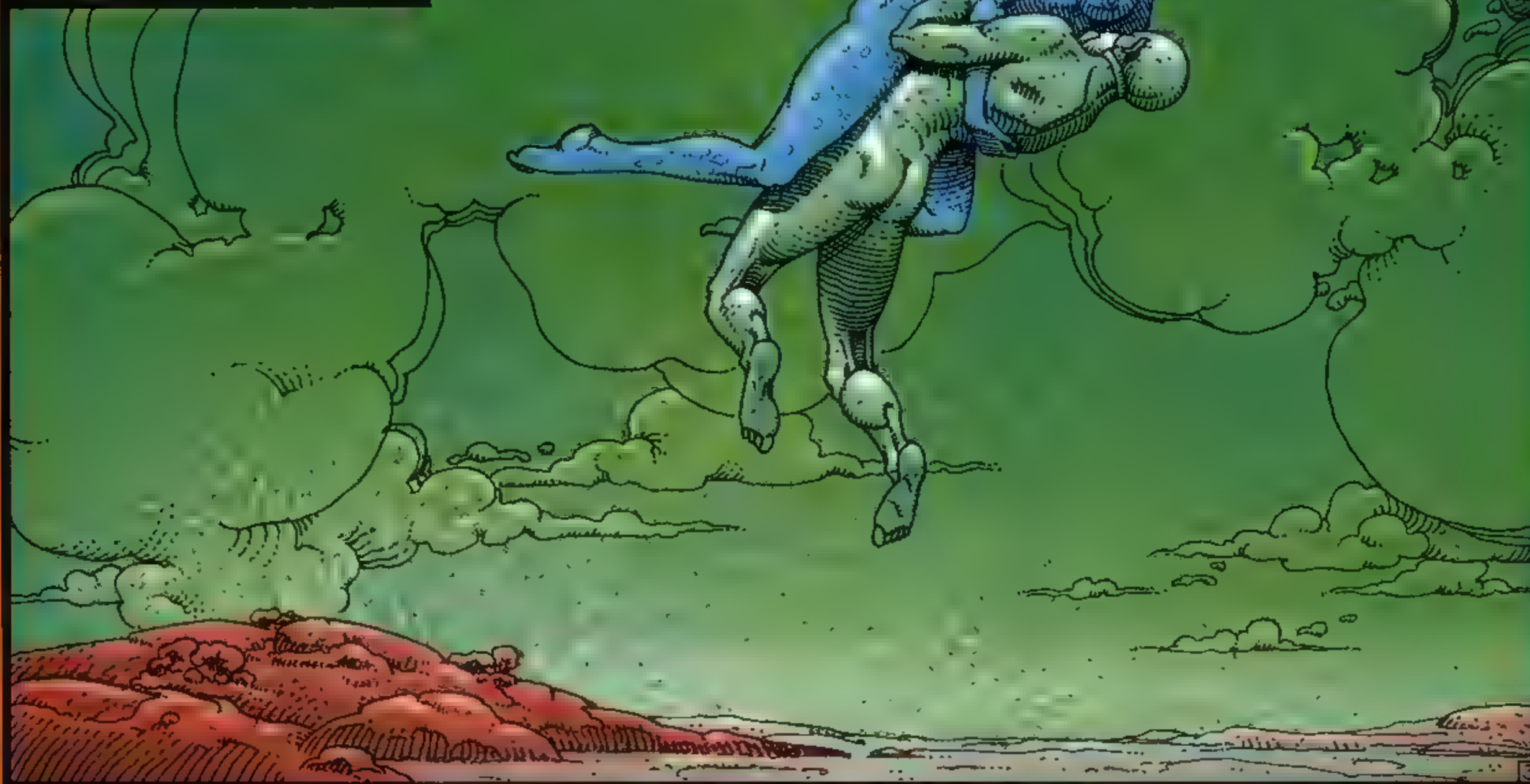


EN-O, IT WOULD
MAKE ME SO HAPPY
IF YOU REMOVED
YOUR MASK...

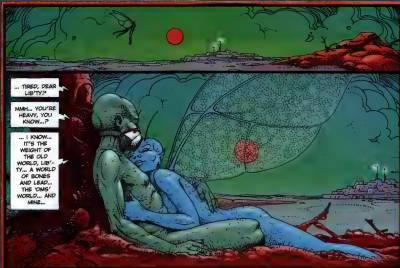
YOU KNOW I CAN'T LIB'TY...
I CAN'T BREATHE THE
AIR HERE...
MAYBE AT A HIGHER ALTITUDE...



COME
THEN!



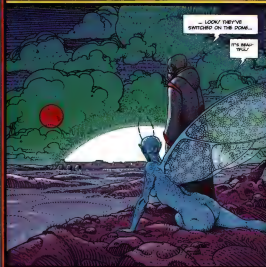




... Tired, dear
Lieb'ly?

Mmm... You're
heavy, you
know...?

... I know...
It's the
weight of
the old
world, Lieb'
ty... A world
of bones
and lead...
The 'omg'
world... and
mine...



... Look! They've
switched on the dome...

It's beau-
tiful!



... I have to go
now... They're
going to lock
the gates...

Take me with
you! Oh-o...
I'll live with
you in aut'om...

... AND HAVE TO FOLD YOUR WINGS
TO GET THROUGH DOORWAYS?...
NO, LISTY! BESIDES... THERE'S THE
LAW OF EUGENICS... WHICH IS ONE OF
THE REASONS THE DOME EXISTS... TO
KEEP THE OTHERS OUT...

STAY
THEN...

YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE...
I WOULDN'T SURVIVE... THERE'S NO
FOOD... NO AIR FOR ME TO BREATHE
HERE ON THE OUTSIDE... I'M AN 'OML...
AND 'OMLS CANNOT SURVIVE ON THE
OUTSIDE...

— ANYWAY, WHO
WOULD WANT TO LIVE
ON THE OUTSIDE?

WHO?... BESIDES
THE OTHERS...

CHAZZ

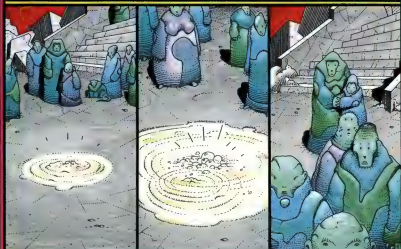
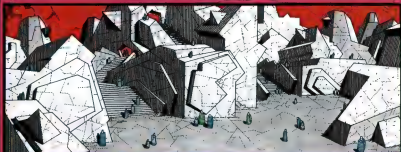
OM

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"REPORT CONCERNING THE EVENTS THAT OCCURRED ON 25 DECADEUARY OF THE YEAR 005 IN THE LAND OF THE 'OM'S....

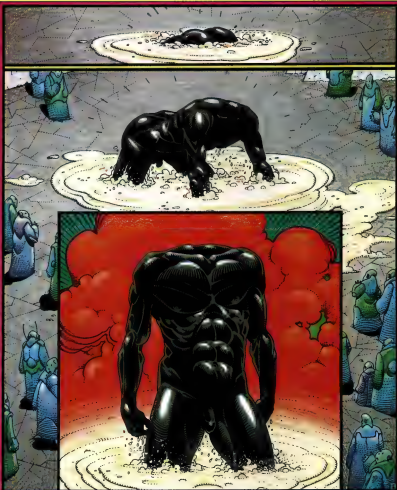
HOUSING PROJECT 'OMPHALE, BLOCK C9-K9 / 7th HOUR...

(THIS REPORT WAS MADE BY THE CENTRAL 'OMEOSTAT OF 'OMPHALE.)

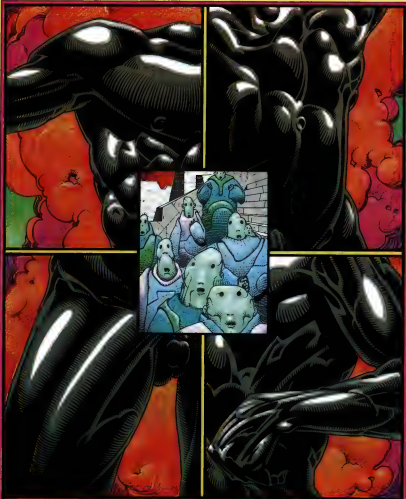


NARRATIVE/1 — AT THE ABOVE-MENTIONED TIME, DATE AND PLACE, AN UNIDENTIFIED LIQUID WAS REPORTED TO BE OZZING OUT OF THE GROUND. — **SUBJECTIVE EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS:** 1. "SECRETION," "SPRING"-LIKE, "BUBBLING," AND SO FORTH —

— **CHEMICAL MAKEUP:** H₂O WITH A LARGE PROPORTION OF MINERALS (NiO, ETC.), TRACES OF COLLOIDAL METAL PARTICLES (Fe, Cu, Mn), TRACES OF ORGANIC MATTER (BLOOD PLASMA, HORMONES, TRACE ELEMENTS, ETC.).



TEMPERATURE: ~ 98°F. — (MOST SIMILAR KNOWN SUBSTANCE: AMNIOTIC LIQUID; Cf. MAMMALS). — *SUBJECTIVE EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS*: 2: "WATER," ETC. ... *NARRATIVE/2* — SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, AN UNKNOWN ORGANISM EMERGED FROM THE LIQUID. IT WAS HEADLESS, ABOUT 16 FEET TALL, AND HAD DARK SKIN. *SUBJECTIVE EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS*: 2: "MONSTER," "BLACK DEVIL," "HEADLESS GIANT," ETC.



"THESE TERMS NOT RECORDED IN CENTRAL MEMORY)... *NARRATIVE/3* - THE ORGANISM STOOD IMMOBILE FOR A FEW MICRO-SECONDS (HESITATION? INFORMATION SEARCH REGARDING NEW ENVIRONMENT?), THEN GRABBED A MALE CITIZEN OF 'OM THAT, (PLEASE NOTE THIS) HAD NOT R-LSD (IDENTITY. KZ 141141 - CLASSIFIED PARTIALLY HANDICAPPED; HYDRO-CEPHALIC DWARFISM). AND DISAPPEARED FROM SIGHT OF ALL WITNESSES. - *SUBJECTIVE EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS*. V. "LIKE A CRUNCHEN" SHID."



"LIKE A WILD* HORSE*" ETC. (**THESE TERMS NOT RECORDED IN CENTRAL MEMORY)...
CONNECTIONS/1 — HEAVY ORGANIC LOAD WITH W.R. RECIPIERS LOCATED ALONG THE ROUTE FROM BLOCK C6-K9 TO THE TOWN'S SOUTHERN EXIT... **CONNECTIONS/2** — ANALYSIS OF COMPUTER DATA PROVIDED BY OPTICAL, SONAR, CHEMICAL AND ORGANIC (W.R.) CAPTORS IN THE MISSING PERSON'S



APARTMENT (IN ADDITION TO DATA PROVIDED BY EYE WITNESSES) SHOWED THAT IN THE PREVIOUS HOUR, 'OMI' CITIZEN KZ (WHITE MALE) HAD CONSUMED ILLEGAL DRINKS (CHICKEN) AND HAD ATTEMPTED TO COPULATE (SIC) WITH THE COMPLICITY OF 'OMI' CITIZEN MJ (SCHIZO FEMALE), WHO HAS SINCE BEEN TRANSPORTED TO THE EUGENICS CENTER FOR GENITAL AND — PERHAPS — MEMORY ANTISEPTICS... CONNECTION/3 — IT WOULD SEEM THAT



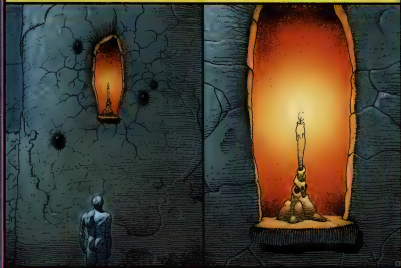
SIMILAR INCIDENTS OCCURRED AT PRECISELY THE SAME TIME AT OTHER LOCATIONS IN 'OMPALE... CONNECTIONS/W -
ADDITIONAL COMPUTER DATA WHICH HAVE NOT YET BEEN FULLY STUDIED INDICATES THAT SIMILAR INCIDENTS ALSO
OCCURRED IN OTHER HOUSING BLOCKS ('OMEGA, 'OMNICROMA, 'OMINOUS, ETC.)...

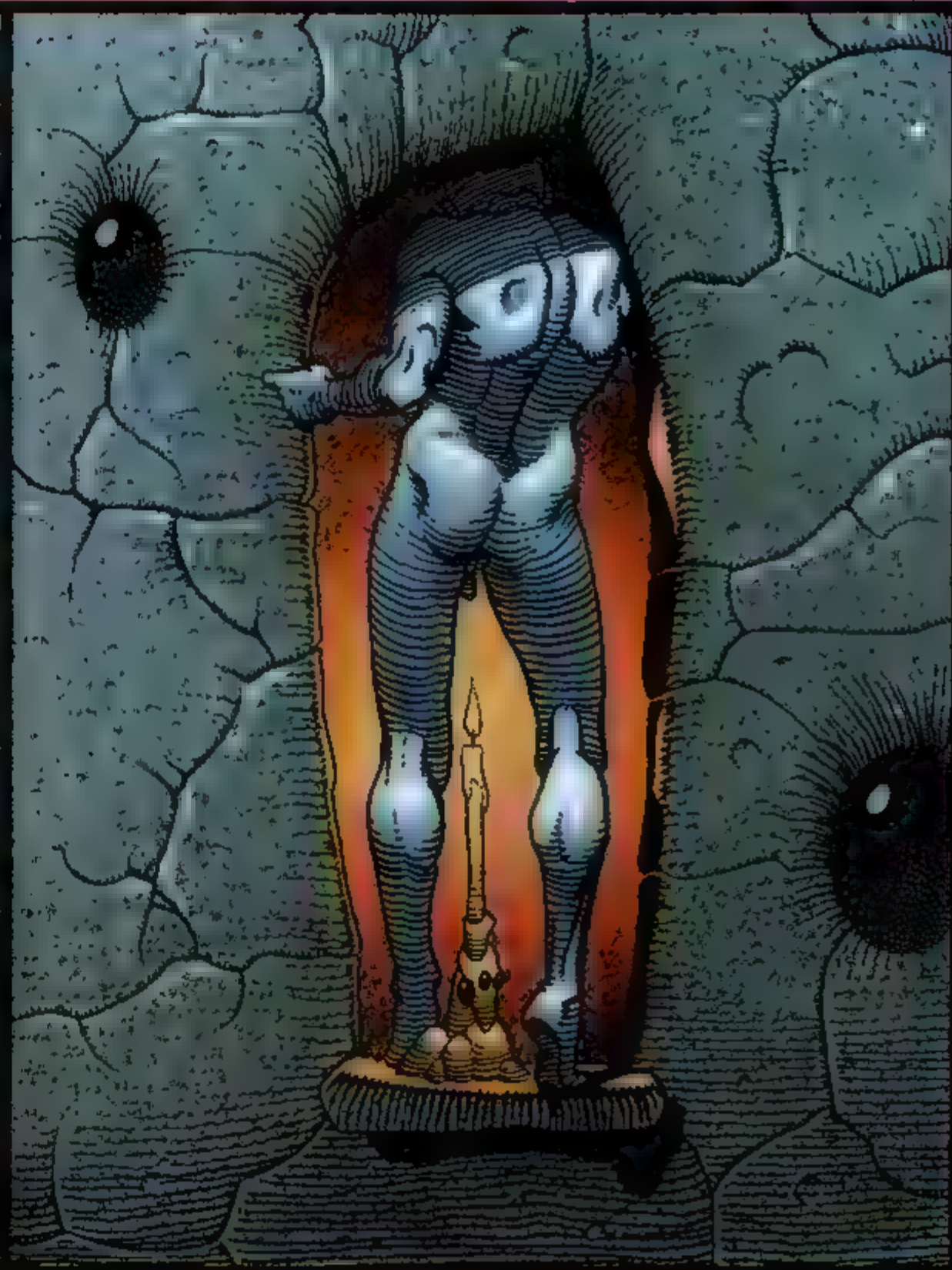
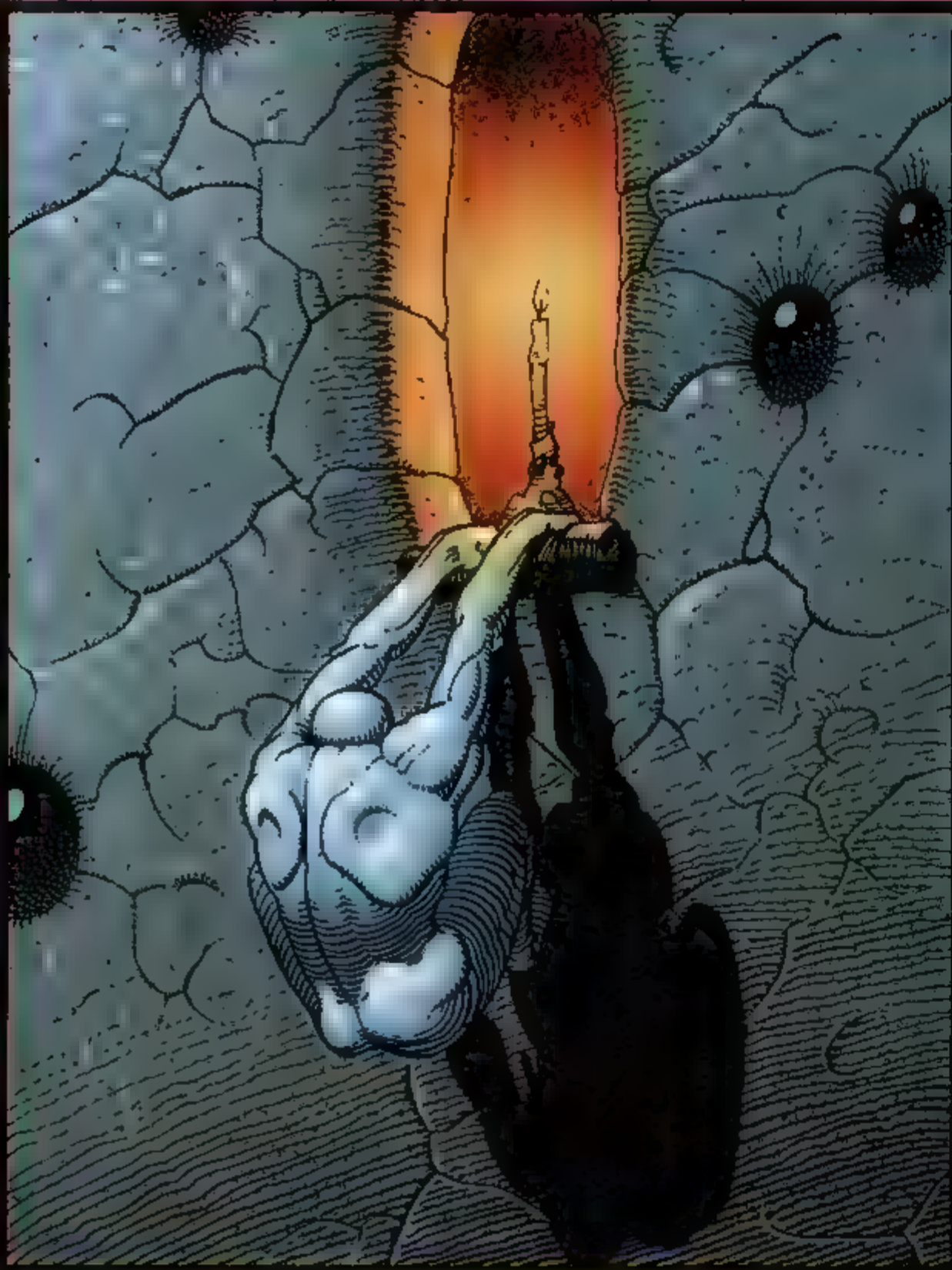


CONCLUSION: - TOO MANY SUBJECTIVE EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS AND ELEMENTS NOT RECORDED IN CENTRAL MEMORY - NO CONCLUSION.*

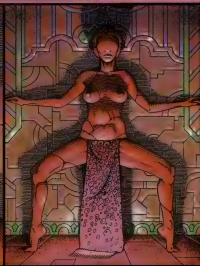
NIGHTTIME

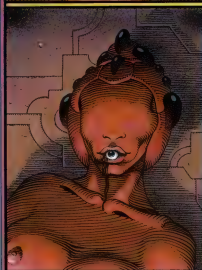
WALT
ZU











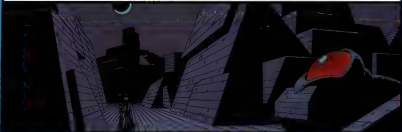
THE DREAMER

DATA

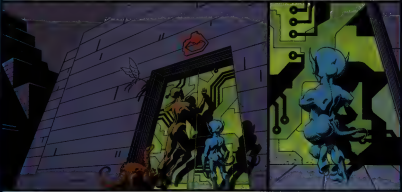
21



IN THOSE DAYS, UNDER THE HOUSING PROJECT CALLED M'DOM, DEEP IN ITS ICY, NEON-LIT CORRIDORS, WAS THE ROOM OF THE DREAMER...



HE WAS AS HANDSOME AS THE ANCIENT GODS, WITH AN ENIGMATIC FACE WHICH APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN CARVED BY GRANTS. IT WAS THE SLEEPING FACE OF A RECLINANT STATUE ON A TOMB. A SERENE, IMMOBILE FACE, RADIATING SILENCE AND PEACE... SUCH SERENITY? SUCH IMMOBILITY?

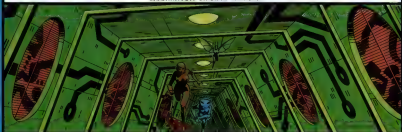


... PERHAPS THE DREAMER WAS A GOD... NOT ONLY DID HE LOOK LIKE ONE, HE WAS AS POWERFUL AS ONE...

... AND YET... PERHAPS THE DREAMER WAS ONLY A GIANT 'OMASTATIC COMPUTER, MADE UP OF BILLIONS OF ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS (BUT WHY GIVE A MACHINE A FACE?...



OR, PERHAPS, HE WAS HUMAN... OR PARTLY HUMAN (FOR IN THOSE PERVERTED TIMES, FLESH AND METAL SOMETIMES MINGLED IN UNMENTIONABLE SYMBIOTIC UNIONS...)



IN FACT, NONE OF THE RESIDENTS OF M'OM WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DEFINE A COMPUTER, A GOD, OR A HUMAN... BECAUSE KNOWLEDGE, LONG COMPRESSED AND STORED IN ELECTRONIC CIRCUITS, WAS GRADUALLY DISAPPEARING FROM THE 'OMS' MEMORIES (AND IT IS RUMORED THAT THAT IS HOW HUMANS, REDUCED TO THEIR SIMPLEST MANIFESTATION, BECAME 'OMS'...



AND SO, THE 'OMS JUST CALLED HIM "THE DREAMER"...

THE DREAMER, YES... FOR HE IS THE ONE WHO DREAMS UP THE CITY OF MCM-- IN ALL ITS GEOMETRIC PERFECTION.



THE IMMOBILE DREAMER, ASLEEP UNDER HIS LEAD SHELL, IN HIS ROOM IN THE DEPTHS...

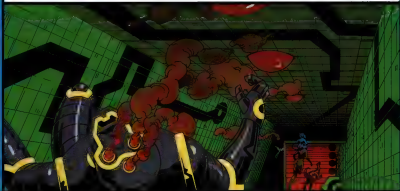


... THE DREAMER, CLOSED AND UNCHANGEABLE, DREAMS UP A CLOSED AND UNCHANGEABLE CITY... AN IMPASSIVE, PERFECT, SELF-REGULATING MONAD, FROZEN IN AN ETERNAL EQUILIBRIUM, IMMOBILITY PUSHED TO ITS ULTIMATE CONSEQUENCE: THE END OF TIME, STASH...

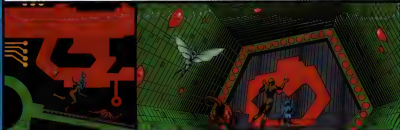


THIS IS WHY THE DREAMER MUST CONTROL EVERY MOVEMENT, ALL CHANGE... INFORMATION IS CONSTANTLY PROVIDED BY PSE-ERS, COUNTERS, CAPTORS, AS WELL AS BY BIOLOGICAL, CHEMICAL, MECHANICAL AND BIONIC SENSORS. HE EVALUATES THE INFORMATION, CORRECTING ERRORS, RESPECTING SHAPES... HE MAKES PLANS, GIVES ORDERS, COORDINATES, AND REMOVES SHADOWY AREAS UNDER THE CRUDE LIGHT OF THE PHOTOPHORES. HE REGULATES, LEVELS, SENSORS...

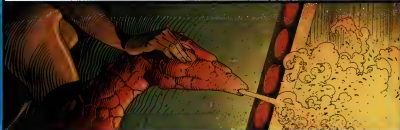
THROUGH THE MANY NERVES OF THE CITY, THROUGH ITS NUTRITIONAL VESSELS, THROUGH ITS TELESMATIC CANALS, THE DREAMER SENDS THE 'OMS INHIBITING PULSES, DEFENSIVE IMAGES, TABOOS, ORDERS, WAVES OF SILENCE...



THIS IS HOW HE TRAPS THEIR THOUGHTS, PROGRAMS THEIR ACTIONS, PUSHING THEM INEXORABLY TOWARD REASONABLE DECISIONS, RISK-FREE CHOICES, AND THE TORPID PATH OF BOREDOM...



THIS IS HOW HE ERECTS WALLS BETWEEN THE 'OMS AND THEIR DESIRES, AND PUTS UP BARRIERS AMONG THE 'OMS-- SO THAT NOTHING WILL EVER CHANGE...



... HE CONTROLS EVEN THEIR SLEEP, PENETRATING IT WITH HIS OWN SLEEP, IMPREGNATING IT WITH HIS DEADLY DREAMS...

THIS IS HOW THE DREAMER FASHIONS THE CITY, GIVING IT THE SHAPE OF HIS DREAMS... THUS, LITTLE BY LITTLE, THE CITY BECOMES THE DREAMER'S DREAM... AND SO THE 'OMS THEMSELVES TAKE ON THE FORM OF HIS DREAMS: AS IMMOBILE AS FOSSILIZED PLANTS...

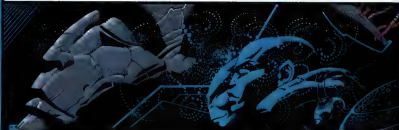


ON THE OUTER EDGES OF TOWN, WALLS ARE BEING BUILT, DEFENSES ERRECTED, AND SCREENS OF NEGATIVE ENERGY ARE PLUNGING UP LIKE SO MANY PROTECTIVE SHELLS...

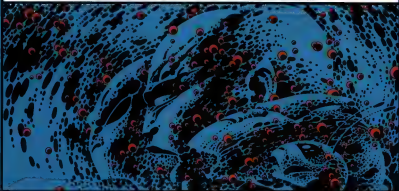


... SO THAT THE PERFECT INNER DREAM THAT GENTLY LULLS M'OM MAY NOT BE DISTURBED BY THE CHAOS OF THE OUTSIDE...

THE OUTSIDE... YET, SOMETIMES, FROM OUTSIDE COME POWERFUL FORCES... FORCES OF LIFE AND DEATH, OF VIOLENCE AND LOVE-- FORCES OF ACTION... (BECAUSE, IN THAT FERTILE COMPOST HEAP THAT IS THE OUTSIDE WORLD, DEVILANTS PROLIFERATE, MONSTERS MULTIPLY, MYTHS COME TO LIFE: IMPATIENT AND IMAGINARY, THEY ARE KNOWN AS THE OTHERS.)



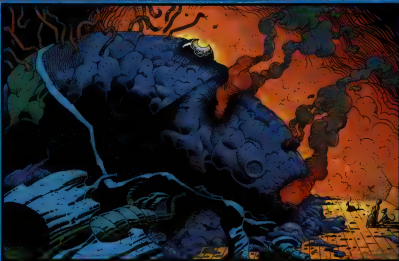
OF COURSE, THE DREAMER USES ALL THE MEANS HE HAS TO STOP THE OTHERS FROM INTRUDING-- BY ARRESTING THEM AND EXPELLING THEM INTO THE OUTER DARKNESS-- AND HE USUALLY SUCCEEDS...



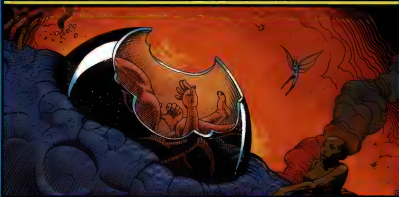
BUT OVER TIME, THE RAMPARTS ARE SHOWN TO BE INSUFFICIENT, THE BARRIERS USELESS, THE WEAPONS INADEQUATE... AND THE YONKS OF THE CITIES-- FOSSILIZED PLANTS-- HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW TO FIGHT...

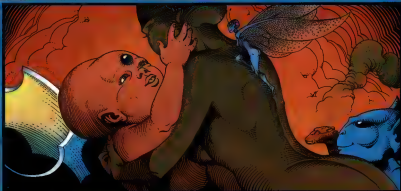


... CONFRONTED WITH THE OBSTINATE FORCES OF THE IMAGINATION, NO SHELTER IS SHIELDED, NO SCREEN IS SAFE...



HOW THE CITY OF M'OM WAS ABANDONED BY ITS INHABITANTS--REPORTED BY THE CENTRAL 'OMBOSTATIC COORDINATOR OF THE 'OMAS' CITIES. "AT 23 HOURS, ON DOZBAIR 34, IN YEAR 4444, IN THE WORLD OF THE 'OMAS, A GROUP OF OUT-OF-CONTROL ELEMENTS (KNOWN AS "THE OTHERS") ENTERED THE CITY OF M'OM AND SUCCEEDED APPARENTLY WITH THE HELP OF UNKNOWN P.S.K. POWERS) IN GETTING PAST ALL BARRIERS AND DEFENSES. THEY REACHED THE ROOM OF THE CENTRAL BRAIN, WHICH WAS KNOWN AS "THE DREAMER". IT SEEMS THE INTRUDERS THEN CONNECTED THEIR RIGHT BRAINS TO THE CENTRAL BRAIN. THIS LED TO AN EMOTIONAL OVERCHARGE AND THE FUSION OF 'OMBOSTATIC COMPONENTS, FOLLOWED BY THE SUDDEN STOP OF THE CITY'S REGULATING SYSTEMS. THE RESIDENTS ABANDONED M'OM AND SETTLED OUTSIDE. SO FAR, NONE OF THEM HAS BEEN GIVEN SHELTER BY ANOTHER CITY. THE HUMAN COMPONENT OF THE CENTRAL BRAIN (KNOWN AS "THE DREAMER'S SOUL") HAS NOT BEEN LOCATED."

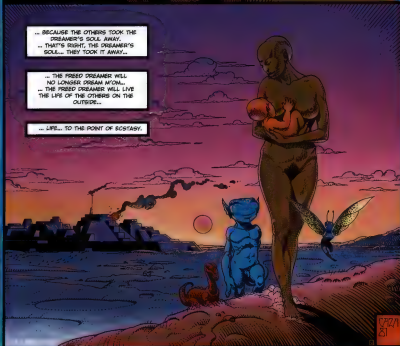




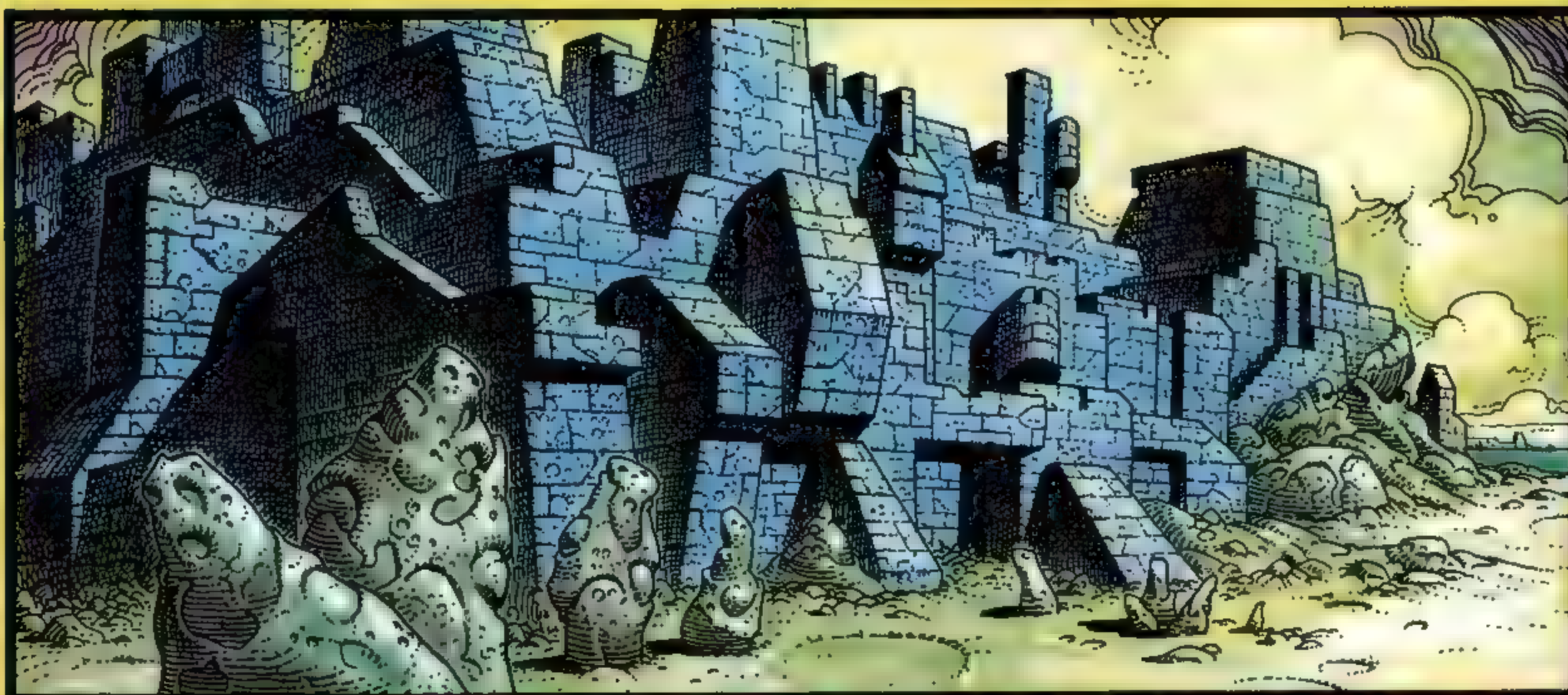
... BECAUSE THE OTHERS TOOK THE
DREAMER'S SOUL AWAY.
... THAT'S RIGHT, THE DREAMER'S
SOUL... THEY TOOK IT AWAY...

... THE PRISON DREAMER WILL
NO LONGER DREAM A'NONE...
... THE PRISON DREAMER WILL LIVE
THE LIFE OF THE OTHERS ON THE
OUTSIDE...

... LIFE... TO THE POINT OF ECSTASY.



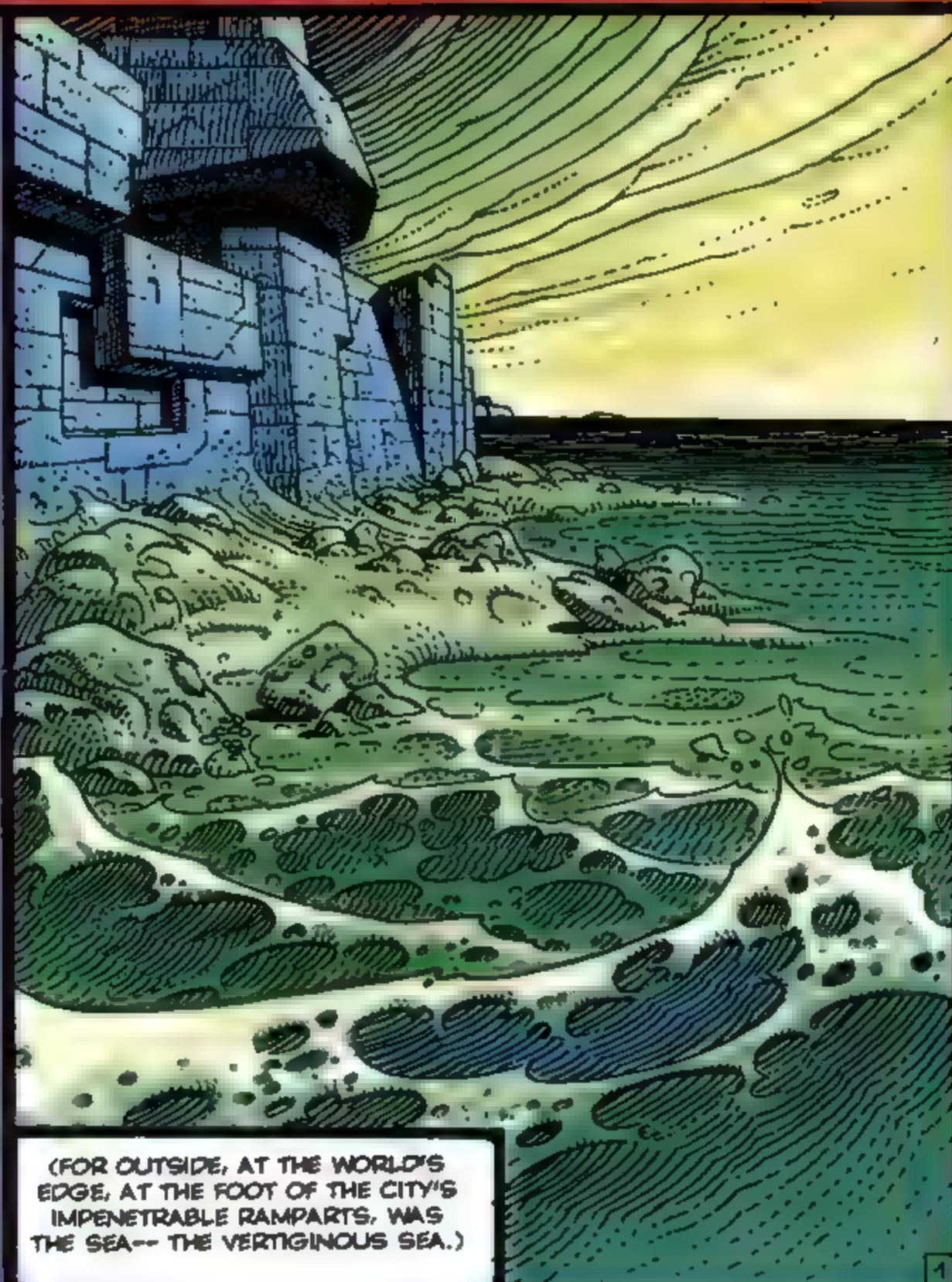
EQUINOX



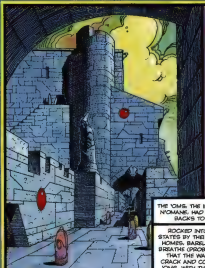
THIS WAS N'OMANE, THE CITY AT THE WORLD'S EDGE: A BASTION AGAINST THE NIGHT, SURROUNDED BY IMPOSING RAMPARTS AND FIERCELY PROTECTED BY DIKES, BREAKWATERS AND BUTTRESSES.

EACH WALL WAS STRENGTHENED WITH INFRANGIBLE METAL, EACH BLOCK OF STONE WAS SEALED WITH LEAD, AND EVERY ARMORED GATE TRIPLE-LOCKED.

N'OMANE, THE CLOSED CITY, WAS PROTECTED AND INACCESSIBLE.



(FOR OUTSIDE, AT THE WORLD'S EDGE, AT THE FOOT OF THE CITY'S IMPENETRABLE RAMPARTS, WAS THE SEA-- THE VERTIGINOUS SEA.)

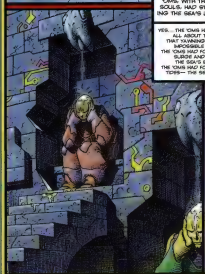


THE 'OMIS, THE INHABITANTS OF NOMANE, HAD TURNED THEIR BACKS TO THE SEA.

ROCKED INTO HYPNOTIC STATES BY THEIR MECHANICAL HOMES, BARELY DARING TO BREATHE (PROBABLY FEARING THAT THE WALLS WOULD CRACK AND COLLAPSE), THE 'OMIS, WITH THEIR PETRIFIED SOULS, HAD STOPPED HEARING THE SEA'S LOUD CLAMOR.



YES... THE 'OMIS HAD FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT THE SEA— THAT TAVNING GULF, THAT IMPOSSIBLE CHOS... THE 'OMIS HAD FORGOTTEN THE SUBGE AND SWELL... THE SEA'S BREATH... THE 'OMIS HAD FORGOTTEN THE TORS— THE SEA'S STEPS...



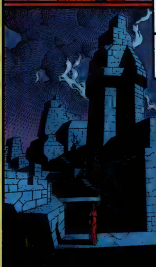


IN NOMEANE, THE CITY AT THE WORLD'S EDGE, LIVED MORGONE, A STRANGER AMONG THE TOWNS...

IN OTHER TIMES, MORGONE WOULD HAVE BEEN THE DAUGHTER OF A KING, AND WOULD HAVE BEEN KNOWN AS A FAIRY— OR A WITCH...

MORGONE HAD PALE SKIN AND THE SILVER EYES OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE MOON. MORGONE HAD NEVER WENT OUT BEFORE DUSK, AND STAYED OUT ALL NIGHT...

(AND EACH NIGHT IN 666 IN THE 534 OF THE TOWNS, WHEN THE EARTH HAD SLOWED DOWN WAS AS LONG AS A LUNAR CYCLE).



AT NIGHT, MORRONE WOULD
STAND ALONE ON THE BARRIERS
AND SING... (SHE SINGS EVERY
NIGHT, FOR MANY MONTHS, WHILE
THE CRUS Huddled IN THEIR
CAVES BEHIND CLOSED DOORS
AND FORGOT THE SEA.)



(MORRONE
SINGS...)

(... AND THE SEA
LISTENS...)

THEN ONE MORNING-- ONE OF
THOSE SLOW, GRAY MORNINGS
WHEN THE DAY SEEMS TO DRAW
UNWILLINGLY...

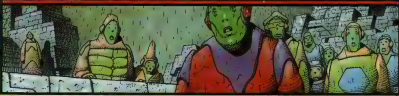
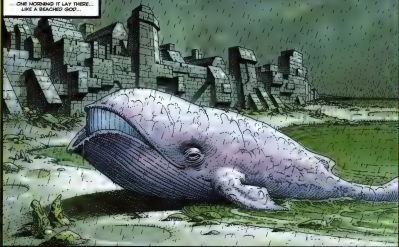


NUN!

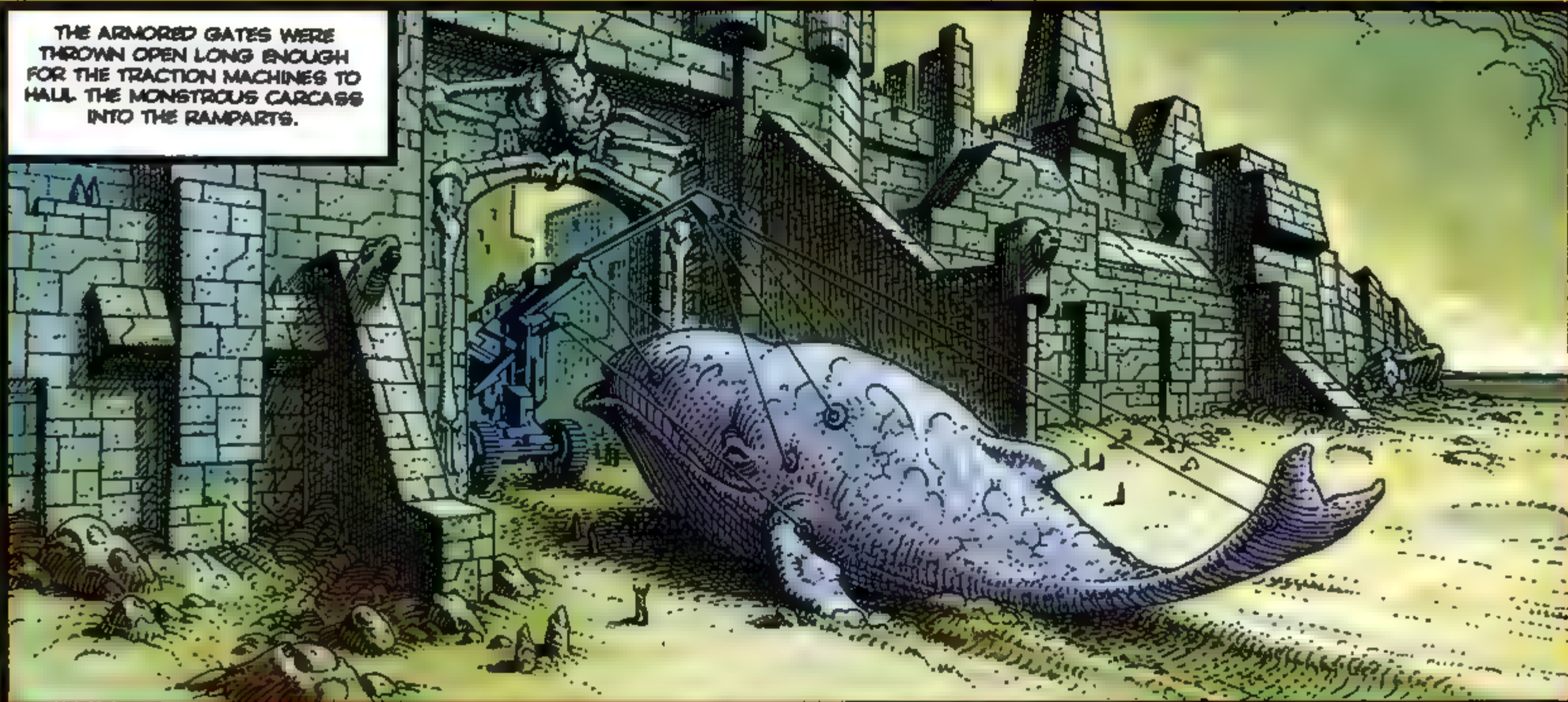
NUN!



...ONE MORNING IT LAY THERE...
LIKE A BEACHED GOD...



THE ARMORED GATES WERE
THROWN OPEN LONG ENOUGH
FOR THE TRACTION MACHINES TO
HULL THE MONSTROUS CARCASS
INTO THE RAMPARTS.





THE 'OM-SCHOLARS EXAMINED THE BEAST. THEY MEASURED IT, TESTED IT IN THOUSANDS OF WAYS, AND DECIDED IT WAS MOST CERTAINLY DEAD AND HENCE HARMLESS... THEN, EXHAUSTED BY THESE ACTIVITIES, THEY WENT BACK HOME.



THE 'OM-BUTCHERS DECLARED THAT THE BEAST WAS LIKELY TO BE CONSUMED SINCE IT WAS CRUSTED OVER WITH SALT AND SILT... AND THE 'OM-KITCHENS WENT BACK HOME.



THE 'OM-CHILDREN PLAYED FOR A BIT WITH THE VANGLISHED MONSTER. THE MOST GRIMLY HELD ON TO ITS NOSE FOR A WHILE... THEN THEY LOST INTEREST.

THE 'OM WOMEN KEPT SILENT.



AT DUSK, EXHAUSTED AND
DISAPPOINTED BY THE
INCONSIDERABLE FORTNIGHT,
THE TOWNS WENT BACK HOME TO
FORGET THE SEA.

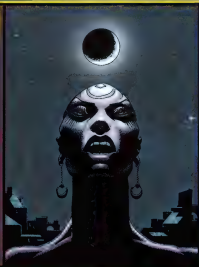


THE LEVIATHAN STAYED WHERE IT
WAS... LIKE AN ISLAND ABANDONED
BY ITS WORKMEN OF A
WHOLE DAY ...



(... THAT NIGHT, SOMEONE DID
NOT GO TO THE BARRIERS TO
SLEEP...)





... AND THEN THEY BEGAN TO
SING...



... THE PALE WOMEN WALKED
THROUGH THE CITY SINGING...



THEY SANG AS THEY KILLED
THE GUARDS...

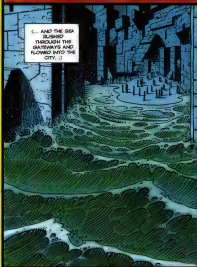


... THEY SAID AS THEY
OPENED THE GATES...

(... AND THE
SEA LISTENED)



(... AND THE SEA
BURST
THROUGH THE
GATEWAYS AND
FLOWED INTO THE
CITY...)

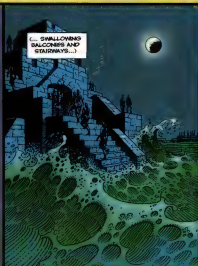


(... AND THE SEA
TURNED THE
STREETS INTO
CANALS AND
FLOODED THE
SQUARES...)

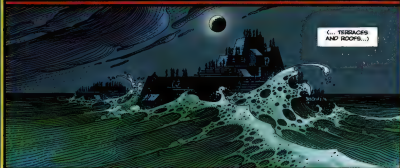




(... ALMOST
SILENTLY,
THE SEA ROSE,
COVERING EVERY
LEVEL OF THE
CITY, STEP BY
STEP...)



(... SWALLOWING
BALCONIES AND
STAIRWAYS...)



(... TERRACES
AND ROOFS...)

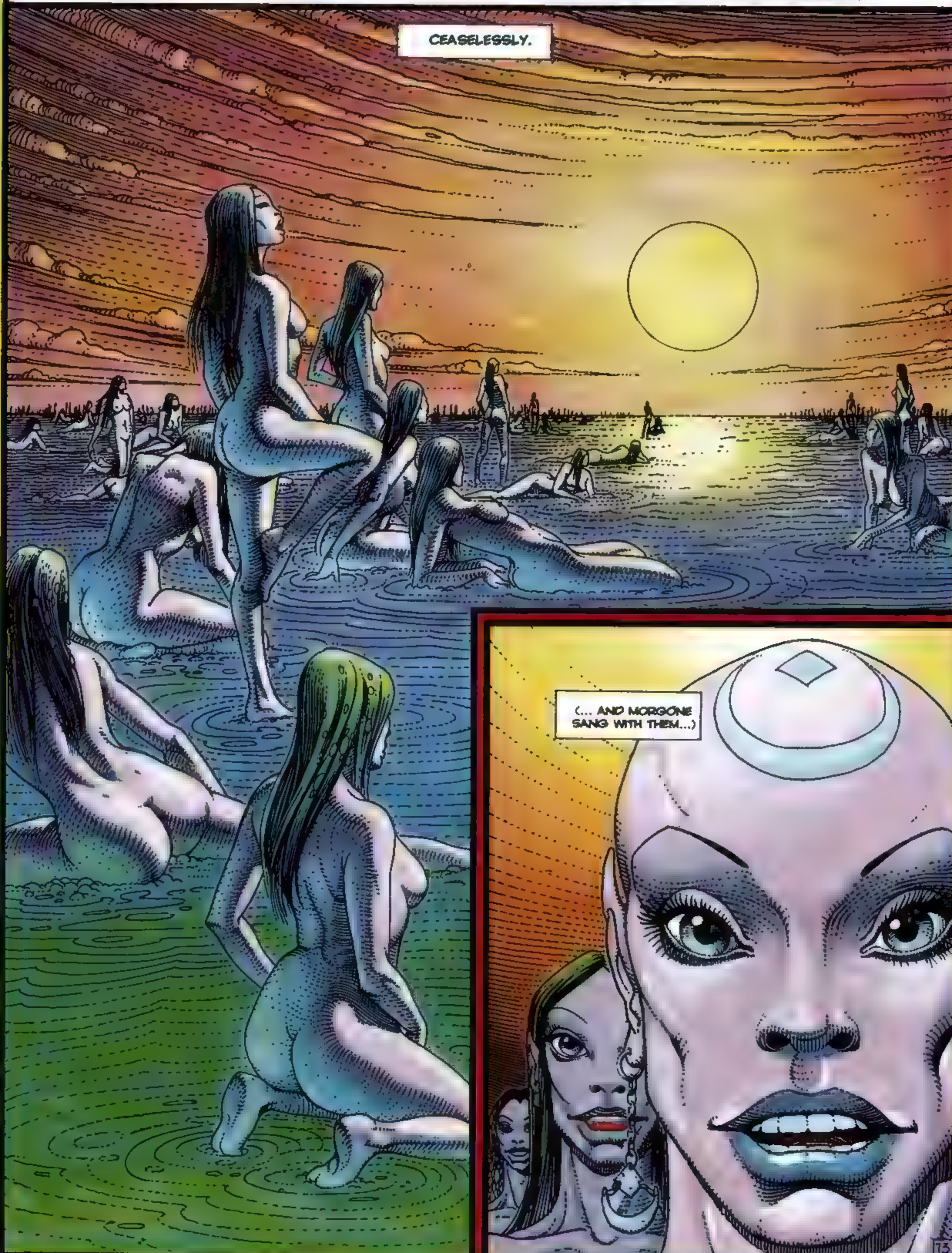
ALL NIGHT LONG, THE
WOMEN WALKED THROUGH
THE CITY, SINGING, AND THE
SEA FOLLOWED THEM...



... TO THE TOP

WHEN THE DAY DAWNED ON THE SURFACE OF THE WORLD THAT HAD BEEN FINALLY CLEANSED, THEY WERE STILL SINGING...

CEASELESSLY.



(... AND MORGONE
SANG WITH THEM...)

EPILOGUE

THAT NIGHT, IN NOMANE, THE
SUBMERGED CITY, AN 'OM-CHILD WAS
BORN OF A SUNKEN INCUBATOR...

... A CHILD WITH
GILLS.





FOG



And so the city of Sh'Om came to an end: The fog seemed to rise out of nowhere, swelling across the ground, oozing off the walls, seeping out of the sky. Gradually it invaded the city...

...slowly solidifying. The impalpably sinister fluid turned into freezing flakes — as viscous and sluggish as ectoplasm.

A vague odor of ozone hung in the air...

Feeling lost and puzzled, the Oms became indecisive and unable to react. Only those who lived near the city gates took refuge in their homes (but they were followed by the fog).

The fog weighed heavily over the city, covering it in milky blindness.

The Oms waited: there was nothing they could do but wait.

The unconscious city
floated into the heart
of paralyzed time. How
many minutes, hours,
days, nights went by?
No one knows.

But then, after an
indefinable length of
time, the fog gradually
lifted, vanishing into
the air like the hair of
angels at dawn.

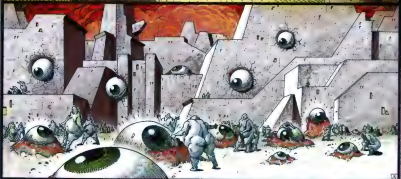
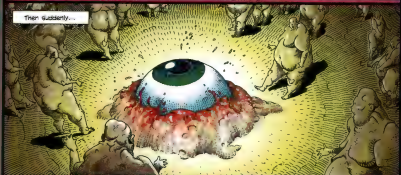
Slowly, shapes and
forms emerged from
the fog. The Oms
stood again in the
light of day. And they
were astounded...

They saw that they
were naked...

The Oms were dumb-founded! Shocked when faced with the unknown.



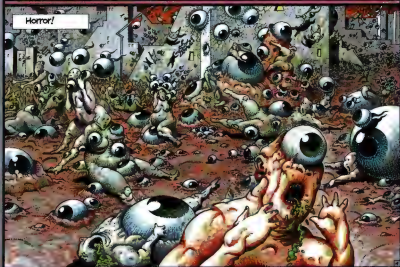
Then suddenly...



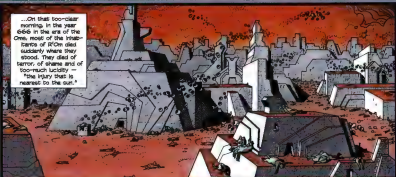
Panic!



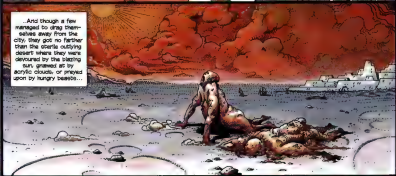
Horror!



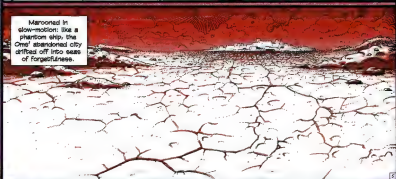
...On that too-early morning, in the year 666 in the era of the One, most of the inhabitants of R'On died suddenly where they stood. They died of terror, of shame and of too-much lucidity - "the injury that is nearest to the soul."



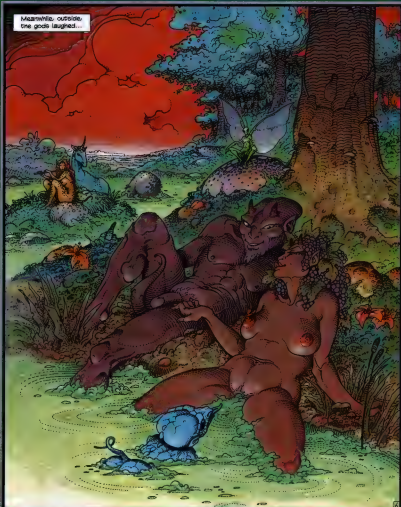
...And though a few managed to drag themselves away from the city, they got no farther than the sterile outlying desert where they were devoured by the blazing sun, gnawed at by acrylic clouds, or preyed upon by hungry beasts...



Marooned in slow-motion: like a phantom ship, the One's abandoned city drifted off into seas of forgetfulness.



Meanwhile, outside,
the gods laughed....



"But find the which that man has a body distinct; from his soul is to be expunged; this I shall do by printing
in the infernal method by correlative, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away,
and displaying the infinite which was hid."----- William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"

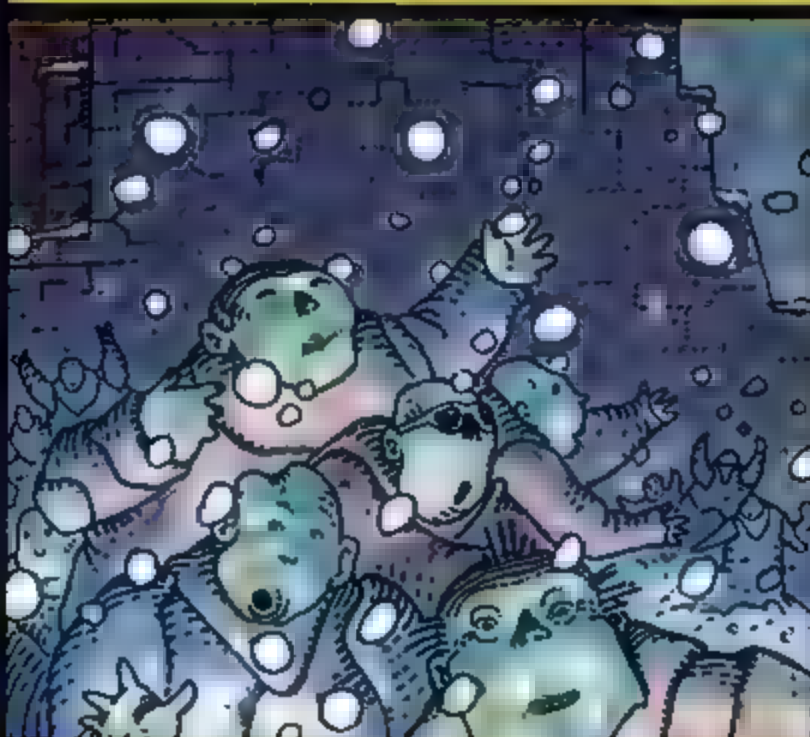
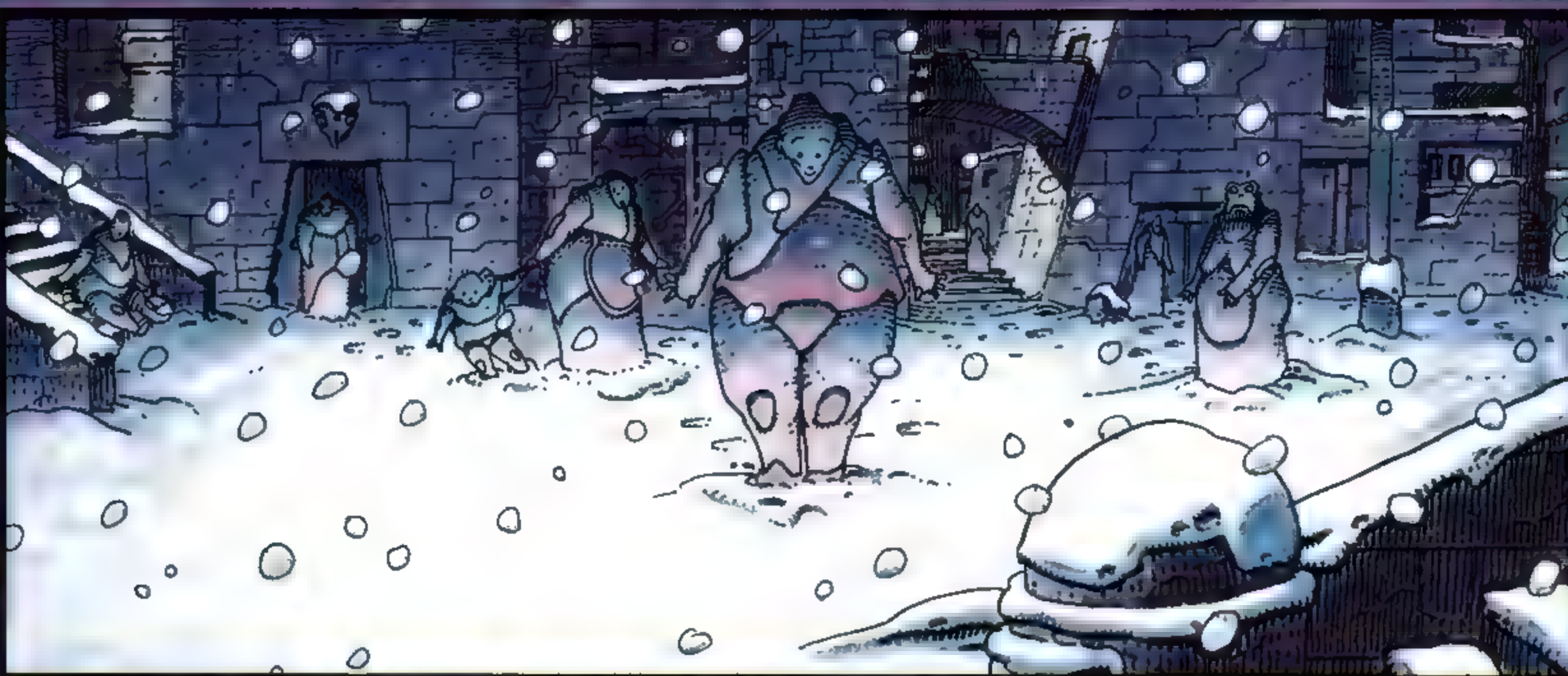
ASHES

PIZZA
33

I MUST ALSO REPORT HOW
THE CITY CALLED YOMBI
CAME TO AN END.

ONE MORNING, AFTER A
NIGHT AS LONG AS A
WINTER MONTH IT WAS THE
YEAR 888 IN THE ERA OF
THE YOMI AND THE NIGHTS
HAD BECOME ENDLESS...
ONE MORNING, THERE WAS...

— SNOW LIKE A GREAT
WALL, LYING DOWN.



THERE WAS A MOMENT OF FOLLY, OF INCREDIBLE EXCITEMENT. THE YMS' FACES LIT UP (IMAGINE THAT!) THEY LITTERED A FEW WORDS, AND THEIR HEARTS BEAT WILDLY...

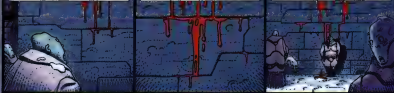
(AND A FEW EVEN FAINTED.)

AND SO THE MORNING WENT BY... IN INNOCENT FEASTING...

AT NOON, THE PARTY WAS OVER... AND
A RED FLUID...

... BEGAN TO SEEP OUT OF EVERY
CRACK IN THE CITY'S WALLS...

... A MANTLE OF HORROR COVERED
THE WALLS, THE SNOWY GROUND...



... AND THE 'OMS.

BLOOD!

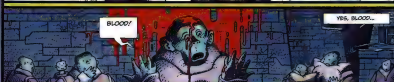
BLOOD!

BLOOD!

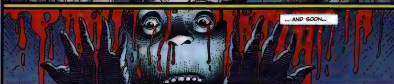


BLOOD!

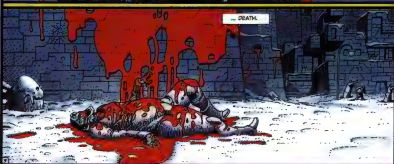
YES, BLOOD...



... AND SOON...



... DEATH.

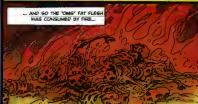




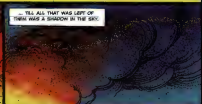
... ALL DAY LONG, THE RED DEATH WALKED UNMASKED AMONG THE 'OMAS... THEN CAME THE TIME OF THE PYRES... THE REMAINING SURVIVORS AND THE MECHANIDS TRANSPORTED THE CORPSES, POURED CHEMICAL FUEL OVER THEM... (THERE HAD BEEN NO WOOD IN THE CITIES OF THE 'OMAS FOR A VERY LONG TIME...)



... AND SO THE 'OMAS' EAT FLESH
WAS CONSUMED BY FIRE...



... YET ALL THAT WAS LEFT OF
THEM WAS A SHADOW IN THE SKY...



... AND THEN THE ASHES WERE
BLOWN AWAY IN HEAVY CLOUDS TO
THE OUTLANDS...

... ASHES, WHICH ARE SOMETIMES
CALLED PIRI EXCRETAMENT...



FERTILIZING ASHES.



ARI-L

Your name was *Ari-L*.
You were a child of
Ompkebe, the city of
lava.

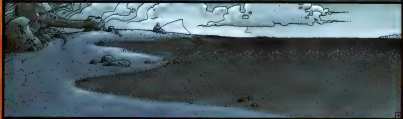
But most of your time
was spent away from
Ompkebe, on the
shores of the *Sea
of Serenity*.

For *Ompkebe*
weighed you down.
The city of basalt
was too massive, too
impenetrable and too
proud in its obsidian
splendor.

You preferred the
shore of the *Sea of
Serenity* — a sea
without water but rich
in ashes, cinders and
of course, serenity.

The hut you built
there was made of
petrified wood and it
was as heavy as the
minerals found on the
bottom of dead seas.

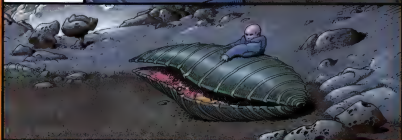
You decorated your
hut with gypsum and
salt flowers and with
animal heads that you
carved out of pumice
stone.



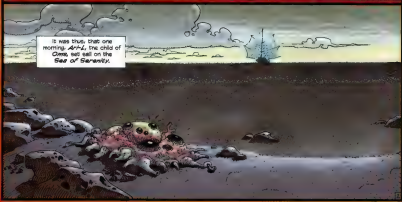
During his long lonely walks on the shore *An-L* managed to forget the placental life of *Omphaleish*, which was gradually devouring the *Ome*.

Sometimes you fished for stone crabs with fragile antennae, or for telescopic marine creatures with lepidolite shells.

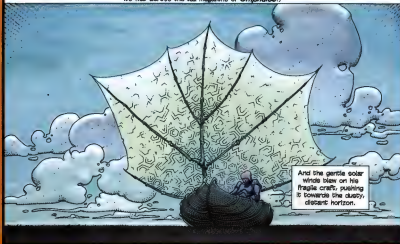
And sometimes, at low tide, you collected fat, heavy, bivalve mollusks, their disgusting insides appearing to ooze at the world. Yet their beautiful pearly shells could serve as a sea-worthy craft.



It was thus, that one morning, *An-L*, the child of *Ome*, set sail on the *Sea of Serenity*.



On one of the cockles of a mollusk, he stuck a bone mast with six tentacles and over it stretched a fine web woven by an *Araclene* (a large synthetic spider that feeds on the smell of storms. It is liberate and somber. In winter, it weaves its web across the tall megaltide of *Omphaleos*.)

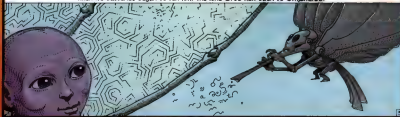


And the gentle solar
winds blew on his
fragile craft, pushing
it toward the dusty,
distant horizon.

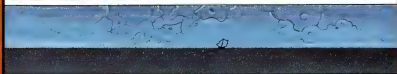
He filled the mollusk's second cockle with a supply of salt flowers, water-laden pears, the gristy flesh of insects, and his collection of living memories to keep him busy during the voyage.



He was followed for several miles by a *Groc* (a bio-mechanical rube-bird whose melancholy song enchanted Ari-L). But when its batteries began to run low, the lone *Groc* flew back to *Omphaleos*.



The voyage was long. (One long One-day. On slow-orbiting One: a day is as long as a lunar month.) Monotony set in.



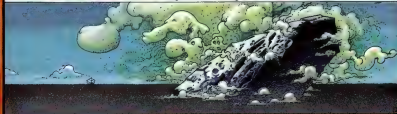
Along the way, *Ar-L* spotted many small isles: there were jet-black lava rocks, coagulated volcanic eruptions...



...and alabaster towers inhabited by flocks of one-eyed flying, pilgrim jellyfish...



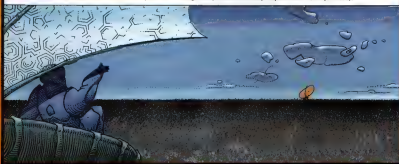
...and blocks of frozen ammonia, which gave off suffocating fumes as the sun melted them down.



Once, he had to navigate around the skull of a sea elephant. He advanced very cautiously. (The skull is the only part of sea elephants that has ever been seen, but it is rumored that their huge bodies burn with a slow flame under the ashes.)



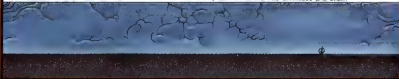
Once, he saw another voluntary sailor, drifting slowly over the heavy asphalt sea. (Ahoy, there!)



Another time, he saw several lost Oms (refugees from a dead city) shipwrecked and mired in the sea. (This was in 666 in the era of Oms, a dark age when many cities died.)



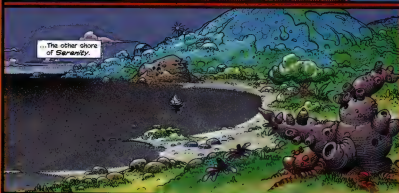
A monotonous voyage... His memories died one by one... The sea was stormless and cold...



Thirst had dried and wrinkled him. He felt corroded and dusty. (Ashes, ashes everywhere!) He had drunk his last salt flower and swallowed his last pear. His last remaining memory was dead (he had soiled it overboard, into the ashes). And that was when he reached the other shore...



...The other shore
of *Serenity*.



...And there, far from
Omphalos, he saw:
This, which is:
A tree.

And this, which is:
A flower.

And this, which is:
a living flesh-and-
blood animal.

And everywhere this
marvelous thing:
greenery.

And... (but must we
name everything?):
dappled shadows,
heady scents (cinnamon,
musk, ginger...)

And an egg...

...and a stream.





And so *Art-L*, child of *Omni*, you know now that the time and place for *molting* has come. You are already shedding your old, scaly, wrinkled skin. It is peeling off in charred shreds. *There is nothing to weigh you down any more... A storm is breaking...* And you have a new name:



The cyph.
ARIEL.



L'LOBO

CAZA
97

IN THIS OMINOUS AGE, THE OMEN
HAVE CLOSED THEMSELVES OFF
BEHIND THE GATES.

STANDING OUT AGAINST
THE NIGHT SKY LIKE
FORTRESSES, THEIR
WELL-PROGRAMMED
DOME-SHAPED CITADELS
OF LEAD AND STEEL
PROTECT THEIR
INHABITANTS FROM THE
EVILS OF THE OUTER
REACHES.

(AND ACROSS
THE NARROW
CHINKS OF THEIR
DOORLESS CAVE-
LIKE DWELLINGS,
THEY'VE PUT UP
BARS.)



(OR WHAT
COULD BE
WORSE THAN
A PRISON?)



SO LIVE THE OMEN, MY
FRIENDS. IN THE OLD
CITY KNOWN AS
OMEN, IN THIS OMI-
NIOUS AGE WHEN THE
EARTH'S SPINNING
HAS SLOWED DOWN.

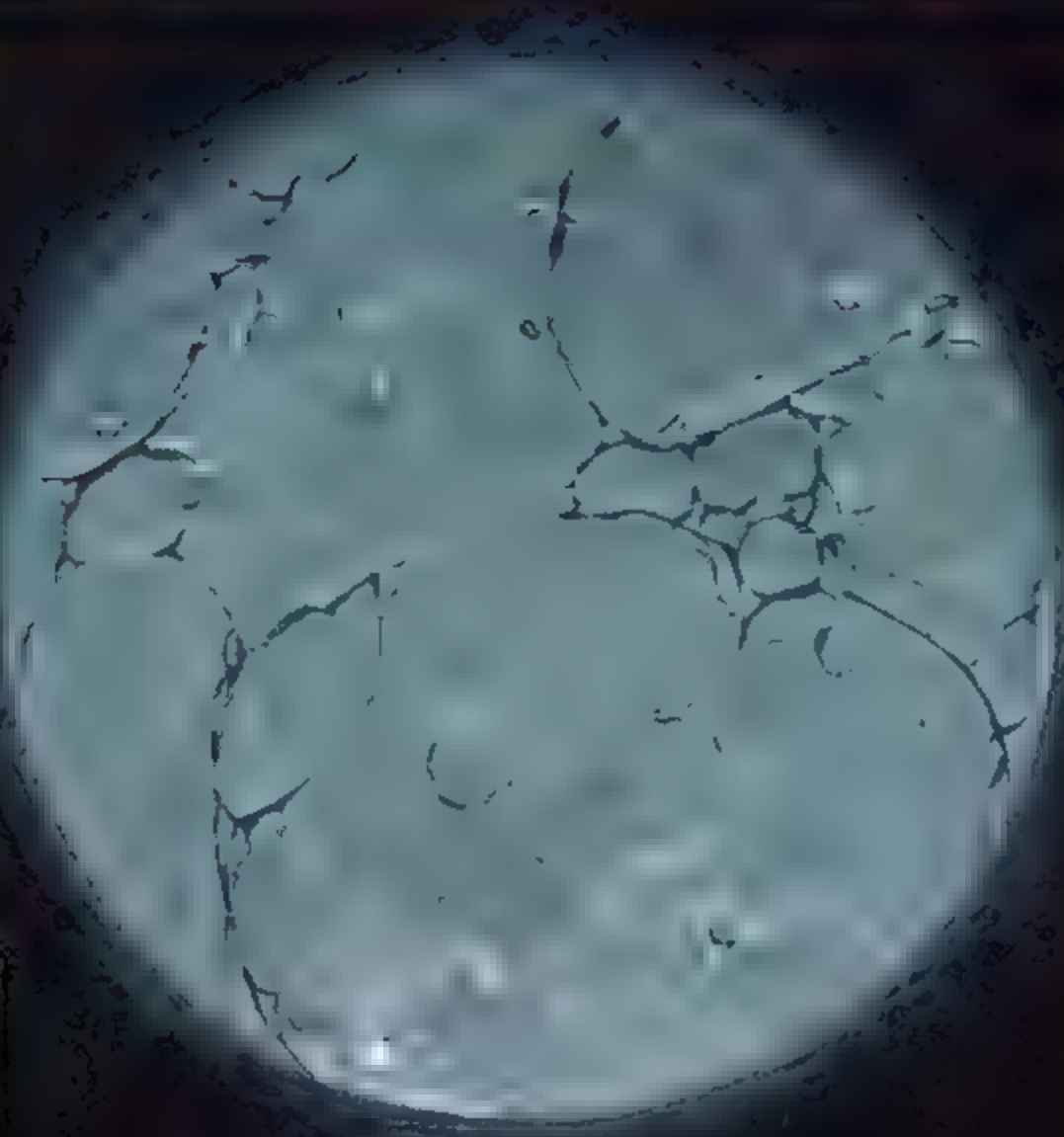
TIME SEEMS TO STAND STILL AND THE SUN HANGS MOTIONLESS IN THE SKY. FINALLY, IT DIPS BEHIND THE HORIZON, GIVING WAY TO DARKNESS.

THE NIGHTS BECOME INCREASINGLY LONGER, COLDER AND MORE TERRIFYING.

THE OMEN TAKE REFUGE IN THEIR MECHANICAL HOMES, AND FALL INTO A LONG, OVERLY PROFOUND SLEEP.

LATER, AN ENORMOUS MOON SLOWLY FILLS THE NIGHT SKY, SORROWFULLY, AS THOUGH MAKING A LAST APPEARANCE.

(AND PERHAPS IT IS THE LAST.)



IT IS THEN, AT THE HEART OF THIS ENDLESS NIGHT, THAT I STEP OUT.

FOR SLEEP, I CANNOT.
FEVER DEVOURS ME AND
A FIERY PAIN BURNS
BETWEEN MY EYES, IN
THE VERY PLACE WHERE
BODY AND SOUL JOIN
TOGETHER.

THE MOON'S ICY
RAYS SHOULD HELP
COOL MY FLAMING
FLESH.

SO I DO WHAT
NO OTHER OMEN
DARES: I GO
OUT AT NIGHT,
WITH THE MOON
AS MY SOLE
WITNESS.



BUT THE
MOON'S
RAYS
EXACERBATE
THE EVIL...



AND SO I SEE
WHAT NO
OMEN HAS
EVER SEEN.

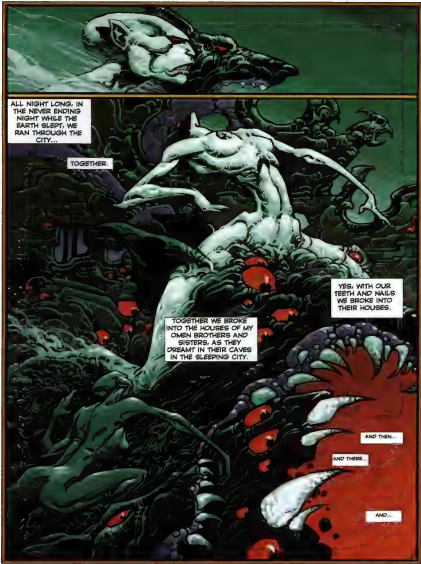


L'LOBO: SOUL OF THE NIGHT, SON OF THE MOON, WHO HAS COME FORTH FROM THE FREEZING NETHERWORLD. L'LOBO, BORN IN THE DEEP WELL OF DARKEST EVENTIDE, DURING THE NEVER-ENDING NIGHT OF THIS OMINOUS AGE...

YOU HAVE COME TO US. YOU HAVE ENTERED THIS FORBIDDEN PLACE, IN THE CITY CALLED OMINE...

WHERE I AWAIT YOU





ALL NIGHT LONG, IN
THE NEVER ENDING
NIGHT WHILE THE
EARTH SLEPT, WE
RAN THROUGH THE
CITY...

TOGETHER.

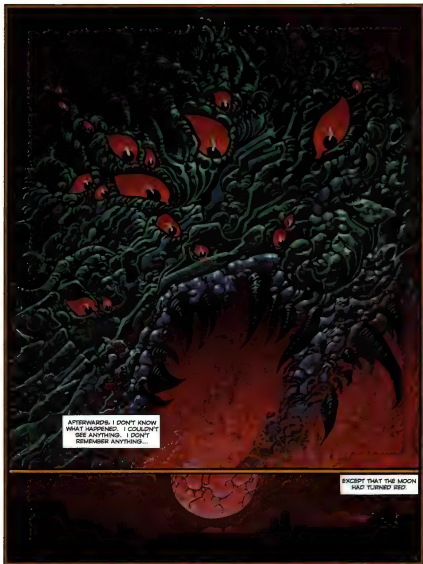
TOGETHER WE BROKE
INTO THE HOUSES OF MY
OMEN BROTHERS AND
SISTERS, AS THEY
DREAMT IN THEIR CAVES
IN THE SLEEPING CITY.

YES, WITH OUR
TEETH AND NAILS
WE BROKE INTO
THEIR HOUSES.

AND THEN...

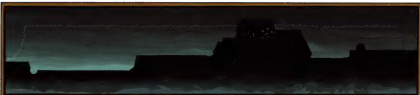
AND THERE...

AND...



AFTERWARDS, I DON'T KNOW
WHAT HAPPENED. I COULDN'T
SEE ANYTHING. I DON'T
REMEMBER ANYTHING...

EXCEPT THAT THE MOON
HAD TURNED RED.



AT FIRST LIGHT, AT THE
CLOSE OF THE ENDLESS
NIGHT, THE PSYROSS CAME
TO MY HOUSE.



THEY TOOK
ME AWAY.



IN THE CRUELLY BRIGHT
DAYLIGHT, I WALKED
BLINDLY ACROSS THE
NIGHT-SCARRED CITY...

THE TEARS OF
THE NEVER-
ENDING NIGHT.



IT'S ALL OVER. I'M GOING BACK TO LIVE AMONG MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, THE OMEN AND OWOMEN, THE INHABITANTS OF THE CITY KNOWN AS OMINE. THE DEVOURING FEVER HAS LEFT ME, THE BURNING PAIN BETWEEN MY EYES, WHERE MY BODY AND SOUL ARE JOINED TOGETHER, HAS DISAPPEARED.



I'VE FORGOTTEN MANY THINGS-- AND ESPECIALLY WHAT I DID THAT NIGHT, ON THAT NEVER-ENDING NIGHT.

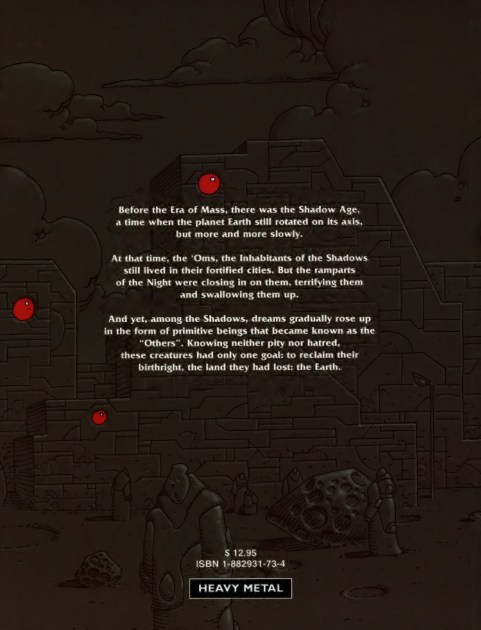


ALL I REMEMBER IS A NAME-- MY OWN, PERHAPS...



WOO

CAZA-97



Before the Era of Mass, there was the Shadow Age,
a time when the planet Earth still rotated on its axis,
but more and more slowly.

At that time, the 'Oms, the Inhabitants of the Shadows
still lived in their fortified cities. But the ramparts
of the Night were closing in on them, terrifying them
and swallowing them up.

And yet, among the Shadows, dreams gradually rose up
in the form of primitive beings that became known as the
"Others". Knowing neither pity nor hatred,
these creatures had only one goal: to reclaim their
birthright, the land they had lost: the Earth.

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